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A
COLLECTION
OF
ESSAYS AND TRACTS
IN
THEOLOGY.

BY JARED SPARKS.

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SELECTION
FROM
WILLIAM PENN'S
WORKS.

WILLIAM PENN.

WILLIAM PENN was born in London, Tower Hill, on the 14th of October, 1644. He was descended from an ancient and highly respectable family, and was the only son of Admiral Sir William Penn, who held at different times many important stations, and rendered valuable public services to the government. The son was early put to school at Chigwell, in Essex, where he was instructed in the elements of learning. According to his biographers, he received while at this school the impressions, which marked the strong peculiarities of his future life.

Anthony Wood relates, that when he was eleven years old, being in his room at Chigwell, "he was so suddenly surprised with an inward comfort, and, as he thought, an external glory in the room, that he has many times said, that from that time he had the seal of divinity and immortality, that there was also a God, and that the soul of man was capable of enjoying his divine communications."* And William Penn himself after-

* *Athenae Oxonienses*, Vol. II. col. 1050.

wards stated, in the account of his travels on the continent, "that the Lord first appeared to him about his twelfth year," and that, during the three years following, "the Lord visited him, and gave him divine impressions of himself."* Whatever part the imagination may have had in creating and fixing these impressions, it cannot be doubted that they exercised a strong influence in deciding the bent of his mind and character.

From Chigwell he went at the age of twelve years to a private school on Tower Hill, where, with the aid of a tutor in his father's house, he was prepared for the University. At the age of fifteen he was entered at Christ's Church, Oxford, as a gentleman commoner. Among his companions and intimate friends at the University was the celebrated John Locke, for whom he ever afterwards cherished a warm attachment. In the first part of his collegiate course Penn was distinguished for his attainments and devotedness to study, as well as for the spirit and vivacity with which he entered into the amusements and exercises suited to his age. But an incident soon happened, which revived the impressions of Chigwell school, involved him in immediate difficulty, and laid the foundation of his future conspicuous career in the character of a powerful, zealous, and unwearied champion of a peculiar religious faith. A man by the name of Thomas Loe came to Oxford, and preached the doctrines of the Quakers. The mind of William

* *Biographia Brit.* Vol. V. p. 3317.

Penn kindled at the discourses of this preacher ; they communicated sentiments in harmony with his own, which at the same time enlisted his feelings, and gained the assent of his understanding. With a few of his fellow students, who were wrought upon in a similar manner, he established meetings, in which they had devotional exercises according to their own views, and gradually deserted the regular forms of religious service in the University. This gave offence to the heads of the colleges, and Penn and all his associates were fined for nonconformity.

Such a step, although it might comport with the majesty of law, was scarcely dictated by the counsels of prudence. It was little calculated to tame the ardent spirits of young men, who believed themselves guided by the imperious calls of duty and truth in worshipping their Creator, and whose conscience, at least to their own minds, bore witness to their sincerity. Gentleness and persuasion, properly applied, may soothe the heat of youthful enthusiasm, but force will commonly add fuel to the flames. So it proved on the present occasion. It was at this time, that king Charles the Second resolved to restore the ancient costume to the University, and he sent orders accordingly that the students should be habited in the surplice. This relic of external forms and observances was extremely odious in the eyes of William Penn and his associates, who held simplicity of dress, and plainness of deportment, to be among the

brightest testimonies of the meekness, selfdenial, and spirituality, essential to a true christian. They could not endure such a monument of human vanity perpetually before their eyes, and Penn, together with several other students, among whom was Robert Spencer, afterwards Earl of Sunderland, made war on the surplice, and tore it from the shoulders of those who ventured abroad in this garb. So flagrant an outrage could not, of course, pass unnoticed, and the authors of it, with Penn among the number, were expelled from the University.

His father was much offended, that his rashness, or his imprudence, should bring upon him such a censure, and he was equally disappointed at the bias which he found his son's mind had received. He had looked forward with high expectations to the success, which he flattered himself would attend his son in the world, favoured by the many advantages which he was enabled to confer on him by his own high station, and his extensive connexions with the leading men in power. But when he found all these bright hopes likely to be blasted by what he deemed the perverseness or unjustifiable singularity of his son, it was a source of mortification and displeasure. He tried argument and expostulation in vain, and he ended by turning him out of doors. This effervescence of passion, however, did not continue long. The son was recalled, and the father thought to dissipate his wayward fancies by sending him abroad,

where new scenes would attract his attention, and new objects press on his thoughts. But this expedient failed, for instead of finding anything to detain him in the gay and varied amusements of Paris, he sought for employments more congenial with his state of mind, and his father heard of him attending the lectures and receiving the private instructions of the famous Moses Amyrault, a calvinistic professor of divinity at Saumur in France. Penn was now nineteen years old, and he read the Fathers, and applied himself to systematic theology for several months, under the direction of Amyrault.

From Saumur he pursued his travels to Italy, but had advanced no farther than Turin, when he received a letter from his father requesting his return to England, that he might take charge of the family during the absence of the Admiral, who was appointed to the command of a fleet then fitting out against the Dutch. Soon after his return he engaged in the study of the law, and was entered at Lincoln's Inn, where he remained somewhat more than a year, till the plague of 1666 compelled him to leave London.

Meantime the religious tendency of his mind was neither diverted nor weakened ; the vivacity of manners, which he had acquired during his travels, wore off by degrees ; he became sedate in his deportment, shunned the company of the gay, and took delight chiefly in the society of sober, religious people. His

father at length came back from his naval expedition, and was again chagrined to find his son leaning to his early habits, and possessing, apparently, no disposition to seek the honours, or attain the worldly distinctions, of which his connexions in life could not but give him a fair promise. One expedient only remained, and to this Admiral Penn determined to resort. He owned estates in Ireland, and was intimately acquainted with the Duke of Ormond, at that time Lord Lieutenant. Thither William was sent, first to the court of the Duke, and then to the immediate superintendence of the estates in the county of Cork. With his promptness and fidelity in the management of business, the father was entirely satisfied, but he was still grieved to learn that no change took place in the religious opinions and propensities of his son, and that neither the society of the great, nor the amusements of fashionable life, had any charms to win him from the pleasures of sober meditation, and the adherence to his peculiar views of religious faith and worship.

An incident occurred, which made the case still more aggravating. William Penn happened to be in Cork on a certain occasion, when it was announced, that Thomas Loe, the Oxford preacher, was about to hold a meeting in that city, where a small body of Quakers resided. This was a temptation not to be resisted; from the time of the disastrous events at the University, Penn had considered himself greatly

indebted to this man, as the person who had awakened in him a proper sense of the spiritual nature of religion, and taught him to despise the vanities of the world, and the solemn mockery of outward forms in devotion, which makes piety a shadow, blinds the eyes of conscience, and cheats the heart of its purest joys. He listened again, with renewed satisfaction, to his favourite preacher, and the result was, that he became a regular attendant on the meetings of the Quakers, and began to be known by that appellation. At one of these meetings he and eighteen others were seized and imprisoned, under pretence that they were violating the law respecting tumultuous assemblies; nor was he released till he had written to Lord Orrery, president of the council of Munster. This letter was manly and dignified, decorous in manner and noble in sentiment, discovering at once a conscious rectitude of purpose, and a fearless freedom in claiming the rights of conscience, and pleading the cause of toleration. It produced the desired effect, so far as his personal liberty was concerned, and he was immediately discharged from prison.

Intelligence of this event coming to his father, he sent for his son to return home, and again expostulated with him in an impressive and affectionate manner on the course he was pursuing. But it was too late; if a doubt had previously existed in the mind of William Penn, persecution had removed it; he had suffered in what he believed the sacred cause of con-

science and truth ; if his purpose had ever been wavering, it was now settled and unalterable. The Admiral made one effort more, however, which was to persuade him to remain with his hat off, while in the presence of the king, the duke of York, and himself. But this mark of outward deference his son declined, as incompatible with the simplicity of pure religion. The opinion of the early Quakers concerning the ceremony of uncovering the head as a token of respect, or of deference to a person present, is thus described by Mr Clarkson. "They took it for granted, that the use of the hat in the way described was either to show honour, respect, submission, or some similar feeling of the mind ; but they contended, that, used as it then was, it was no more a criterion of these than mourning was a criterion of sorrow. The custom, therefore, in their opinion, led to repeated acts of insincerity. A show was held out of the mind's intention, where no such intention existed. Now christianity was never satisfied but with the truth. It forbad all false appearances. It allowed no action to be resorted to, that was not correspondent with the feelings of the heart. Secondly, in the case where the custom was intended to have any meaning, it was generally the sign of flattery ; but no man could give way to flattery without degrading himself, and at the same time unduly exalting the person whom he distinguished by it. Hence they gave to the custom the name of *hat worship*, a name which it bears among

them at the present day.”* Such were the reasons, which convinced William Penn, that it was his duty not to accede to his father’s request, in the ceremony of the hat, even out of respect to the king himself. The Admiral was vexed at this persevering obstinacy in what appeared to him a thing of trifling importance as a matter of conscience, but which had become by the rules of society an innocent custom, constituting at once a test of good manners and of a regard for social order. His patience was again exhausted, his passions rose above his paternal feelings, and he compelled his son a second time to go from home under the weight of his severe displeasure.

He was now enlisted with his whole soul in the cause of the Quakers, and in the year 1668 he resolved to enter on the office of a preacher in that sect, and to devote his life to the promulgation of the tenets by which it was distinguished. No one, who has followed his progress thus far, and witnessed the inherent firmness of his mind and energy of his character, will doubt that he was true to his purpose. It was now that he entered the broad sphere of public life, and launched on the ocean of popular religious controversy, where, for upwards of forty years, he sustained himself as one of the most distinguished persons of the age in which he lived.

* Clarkson’s Memoirs of the Private and Public Life of William Penn. Chap. III.

He had scarcely commenced his ministerial career, when he was furnished with convincing proofs, that tranquillity and personal comfort were the last things of which he could cherish any good hope in the discharge of his new duties. To be the preacher of an unpopular faith, to encounter prejudices and endeavour to eradicate errors, to expose the mischiefs of false religion, and call on men to relinquish their ancient belief and habits, was not a task calculated to secure rewards of gratitude, or to make the path of life peaceful and smooth. Hosts of adversaries came forward, but no power of opposition could daunt the spirit of William Penn. His zeal and exertions were adequate to every occasion, and by example and exhortation, by preaching and writing, he boldly confronted his enemies, and stood forth as the determined and unwearied champion of the cause he had espoused.

His first publication was entitled *Truth Exalted*, and was designed to explain the principles of his faith, to show that they were built on divine authority, that they were the true principles of pure and vital religion, far removed from human traditions and profane ceremonies, and eminently calculated to bring forth the genuine fruits of christianity, meekness, love, charity, and a good life. The point of the treatise consisted in showing, that truth was exalted in the faith and practice of the Quakers, whom bigoted sectaries, or ignorant and designing men, had been free to

calumniate as void of religion, as heretics, or infidels. The field of controversy was now fairly open, and William Penn's labours daily increased on his hands.

Shortly after this time a publication appeared, under the title of a "Guide to True Religion," in which the author undertook to point out the way by which a person must arrive at a true christian faith; and that was to believe a certain set of articles kindly strung together by the writer, and honoured with the name of a christian's creed. All who deviated from this way, or in other words, all who did not hang their faith implicitly on this creed, were declared to be without the pale of salvation, and bewildered in the hopeless region of infidelity. Among these outcasts the author particularly recounted Papists, Socinians, and Quakers. This treatise found its way into the hands of William Penn, and, as expressed by his biographer, "it set him as it were on fire." He could not brook the arrogance, which should consign to perdition a fellow mortal, who could not violate conscience by pretending to believe what his understanding pronounced to be false and at variance with the plain light of Scripture; he had no patience with the insufferable pride and antichristian spirit, which should look down as from a higher and holier eminence, and heap anathemas on the head of a brother, under the hypocritical garb of a pretended concern for his eternal welfare; he could not endure the overbearing selfsufficiency, which should rail

against the Papists for claiming infallibility, and at the same time set itself up as a universal judge, scattering the poison of calumny and the arrows of death without mercy and without shame ; he might pity the ravings of deluded bigotry, and look with compassion on the extravagancies of a sickly fancy, but he was indignant at the audacity which passed a judgment, that belonged only to the Searcher of hearts, and at the hypocrisy of him, who would exalt his own goodness by fixing a stigma on the faith of his brethren, where the eye of malice could not detect a spot on the character. He felt himself bound to reply to so unjust a representation of the means of obtaining proper views of christianity, and to expose and censure so flagrant an abuse of its spirit and purposes. This was done in a small work, called the *Guide Mistaken*, in which he confuted the doctrines of his opponent, and placed in a clear light not only the errors of his creed, but the faults of his heart and practice.

This treatise had but recently gone out to the world, when an occurrence took place, which proved to be of no inconsiderable importance in its consequences. As it has a particular bearing on that portion of Penn's writings selected for the present work, it will doubtless not be amiss to dwell upon it in this place at considerable length. It is thus described by Mr Clarkson.

“Two persons belonging to a Presbyterian congregation in Spital Fields went one day to the meetinghouse of the Quakers, merely to learn what their religious doctrines were. It happened that they were converted there. This news being carried to Thomas Vincent their pastor, it so stirred him up, that he not only used his influence to prevent the converts in question from attending there again, but he decried the doctrines of the Quakers as damnable, and said many unhandsome things against them. This slander having gone abroad, William Penn, accompanied by George Whitehead, an eminent minister among the Quakers, who had already written twenty nine pamphlets in their defence, went to Vincent, and demanded an opportunity of defending their principles publicly. This, after a good deal of demur, was agreed to. The Presbyterian meetinghouse was fixed upon for this purpose, and the day and hour appointed also.

“When the time came the Quakers presented themselves at the door; but Vincent, to ensure a majority on his side, had filled a great part of the meetinghouse with his own hearers, so that there was but little room for them. Penn, however, and Whitehead, with a few others of the Society, pushed their way in. They had scarcely done this, when they heard it proclaimed aloud, that ‘the Quakers held damnable doctrines.’ Immediately upon this Whitehead showed himself. He began, in answer to the charge, to explain aloud what the principles of the

society really were; but here Vincent interrupted him, contending that it would be a better way of proceeding for himself to examine the Quakers as to their own creed. He then put a proposal to this effect to the auditors. They agreed to it, and their voice was law.

“ Vincent, having carried his point, began by asking the Quakers, ‘ Whether they owned one Godhead subsisting in three distinct and separate persons?’ Penn and his friend Whitehead both asserted that this, delivered as it was by Vincent, was no scripture doctrine. Vincent, in reply, formed a syllogism upon the words ‘ There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one,’ and deduced from these the doctrine of three separate subsistences and yet of but one Deity. Whitehead immediately rejected the term ‘ subsistence,’ as nowhere to be found in the Scriptures, and demanded that their opponents should explain it, as God did not wrap up his truths in heathenish metaphysics, but delivered them in plain language. Upon this, several attempted an explanation; but the sum of all their answers was, that subsistence meant either person or the mode of a substance. To these substitutes William Penn and Whitehead both objected. They urged many texts from Scripture in behalf of their objection, and having done this, they begged leave to ask Vincent one question in their turn, namely, ‘ Whether God was to be understood in

an abstractive sense from his substance?' But the audience pronounced this to be a point more fit for admiration than dispute."*

Thus was the debate kept up till very late at night, and often with symptoms of tumult and improper conduct on the part of the audience. This consisted almost wholly of the friends of Vincent; and Penn and Whitehead had no alternative but to submit to such method of controversy as they might impose, and to such indignities as their zeal, heated by the example of their pastor, prompted them to inflict. Several persons discovered great intemperance in this respect, as they "laughed, hissed, and stigmatised the Quakers by various opprobrious names, of which that of Jesuit was exclusively bestowed on William Penn." The meeting finally broke up in a disorderly manner, after Vincent had abruptly left the house, and his party had extinguished the candles. Vincent agreed to meet them on another day, but he could not afterwards be made to fulfil his promise.

It cannot be supposed, that under the circumstances above enumerated, the weight of argument could have had much effect on either side. Against the Quakers in particular, to such a degree were the passions of the people excited, that they were in no condition to hear their grounds of defence, and much less to consider calmly the arguments advanced by them in support

* Clarkson's *Life of William Penn*, Chap. IV.

of their faith. In this state of things William Penn resolved to come before the public with a written testimony, touching the topics which had been agitated in the late conference with the Presbyterians. To this end he wrote the *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, in which are discussed in a very masterly manner the three great doctrines of the Trinity, Atonement, and Imputed Righteousness. From Scripture and reason he proved the common notions in regard to these doctrines to be erroneous, traced them to their origin, and showed the mischievous consequences to which they must necessarily lead. Few works are marked with a more rigid logic, a greater clearness of conception, or force of argument.

The *Sandy Foundation Shaken* produced much excitement when it appeared, and many dignitaries of the established church, especially the bishop of London, professed to be offended at the freedom of the author. "It was then a high crime," says Clarkson, "to defend publicly and openly as in print, the unity of God detached from his trinitarian nature." The usual arguments of intolerance and bigotry were resorted to, and William Penn was sent a prisoner to the Tower for presuming to defend his character against calumny, by showing the public that he had a reason for his faith.

While in prison he was for a time kept in close confinement, and treated with severity, not even being allowed to see his friends. In this situation he was

informed, that the bishop of London had declared he should either recant, or end his days in prison. When Penn heard this, he replied to the person who gave him the intelligence, "All is well; I wish they had told me so before, since the expecting of a release put a stop to some business. Thou mayest tell my father, who, I know, will ask thee, these words; that my prison shall be my grave before I will budge a jot; for I owe my conscience to no mortal man; I have no need to fear; God will make amends for all. They are mistaken in me; I value not their threats nor resolutions, for they shall know I can weary out their malice and peevishness; and in me shall they all behold a resolution above fear, conscience above cruelty, and a baffle put to all their designs by the spirit of patience, the compassion of all the tribulated flock of the blessed Jesus, who is the author and finisher of the faith that overcomes the world, yea, death and hell too. Neither great nor good things were ever attained without loss and hardships. He that would reap and not labour, must faint with the wind, and perish in disappointments; but an hair of my head shall not fall without the providence of my Father, who is over all."* The spirit, which could utter itself in a strain like this, within the gloomy walls of a prison, was not to be overcome with force, nor intimidated with boasts of power, and threats of suffering.

* See the Preface to an Edition of the *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, published in London, 1818. p. v.

To render himself unconscious of the weary hours as they passed, Penn applied himself, during his imprisonment, to study and writing. It was here that he wrote one of his most celebrated works, entitled *No Cross, No Crown*. This would be regarded as a very remarkable performance from any hand, but when we consider that the author was only twenty five years old when he wrote it, that he was closely confined in a prison, and that it was completed under these circumstances within a period of less than six months, we cannot but look on the mind which produced it, as of the highest order, disciplined and matured in a degree very uncommon at that age. The title sufficiently indicates the subject of the work, which was in accordance with his condition and feelings when he wrote. This treatise, at the same time it is an ingenious defence of the religious opinions and conduct of its author, and of the Quakers generally, abounds in practical wisdom and deep thoughts, and discovers a wide range of reading in ancient and modern authors.

He also composed while in prison a small tract called *Innocency with her open Face*, which was occasioned by a belief, that his views of the trinity, contained in the Sandy Foundation Shaken, had been misunderstood. In this tract he supports anew his objections to the doctrines of satisfaction and imputed righteousness, and of the tripersonal nature of the Deity, but declares, that he means not to deny the divinity of Christ. Neither in this tract, nor in his writings ge-

nerally, where he often recurs to the subject, is it easy to come at his precise notions respecting the nature of Christ. He speaks with more directness and perspicuity in the *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, than any where else, but when all he has said in different places is brought together and compared, there is considerable obscurity as to the exact impressions existing in his own mind. He denies a trinity of persons, and yet holds Christ to be in some sense God. As far as it can be understood, his scheme approaches nearly to that of Dr Watts, which takes the divinity of Christ to be a sort of indwelling of the Father, constituting a union so close, that the name of the Deity may properly be applied to the Son.

After remaining in prison seven months, he was suddenly released by order of the king. His enemies have accused him of recanting his sentiments, and thus procuring his freedom at the expense of his consistency, or what is worse, of his sincerity ; and the tract just mentioned is referred to as a proof of the charge. But this accusation has more in it of ill nature than of truth. It does not appear, that the tract had anything to do with Penn's release ; this was procured by the interposition of the Duke of York, who was his father's particular friend.

After being again restored to liberty, Penn returned to his pastoral duties, and, with a zeal in no degree diminished by suffering, preached the doctrines which he had done so much to defend and

impress on the world. The most cheering circumstance, which happened to him at this time, was the reconciliation of his father. At his request he went over again to Ireland for the purpose of executing some commission in the way of business. He preached in Dublin, Cork, and different parts of the Island, and wrote and distributed tracts explaining his religious views. By his intercession with the Lord Lieutenant he also succeeded in releasing several of his brethren from confinement, who had been imprisoned on account of their religious tenets. He returned to England, and took up his residence in his father's house.

The leading particulars in the life of William Penn have thus been enumerated, as far as they are necessary to illustrate those parts of his writings, which have been chosen for insertion in the present collection. Were this fruitful and interesting topic to be pursued to the end of his eventful life, it would occupy a vastly greater space, than would be consistent with the plan of this publication.

He continued a preacher as long as he lived, and for many years made frequent excursions in England and Wales, in the exercise of his ministerial functions. In 1670 he was seized while preaching in London, and imprisoned in Newgate, under pretence of his violating the Conventicle Act. He was tried at the Old Bailey and acquitted. The details of this trial, as recorded by Clarkson, are very curious, both as

illustrating the spirit of the times, and the character and powers of William Penn. He twice visited the continent, and made the tour of Holland and Germany, in the character of a preacher. In 1682 he obtained a charter for the tract of country now known as the State of Pennsylvania, and came over to take possession of it the year following. He remained two years, and then went back to England. In 1699 he again visited Pennsylvania, and continued there a second time nearly two years, when he embarked for England, and never came more to this country. In 1712 he was severely attacked with apoplexy; his faculties became gradually impaired, and for five or six years he was very little abroad. He died on the 30th of July, 1718, in the seventy fourth year of his age.

His works were very numerous, chiefly on religion, morals, and politics. Some of them passed through several editions during his lifetime, particularly *No Cross, No Crown*, and the *Sandy Foundation Shaken*. A full collection was first made in 1726, and published in two volumes folio, to which was prefixed a life of the author. In 1771 was published an edition of his "Select Works" in one volume folio; and again in 1782 this selection was printed in five volumes octavo. To this also is attached a life of the author, but it is neither full, judicious, nor satisfactory. Clarkson's Life of Penn is the best, as being faithful and copious, plain and unpretending; but the literary exe-

cution is quite below the subject, and there is still wanting an elegant biographical memoir of the founder of Pennsylvania.

The present notice cannot be more appropriately closed, than by the following eloquent eulogy contained in Mr Du Ponceau's Discourse on the Early History of Pennsylvania.

“William Penn stands the first among the lawgivers, whose names and deeds are recorded in history. Shall we compare with him Lycurgus, Solon, Romulus, those founders of military commonwealths, who organised their citizens in dreadful array against the rest of their species, taught them to consider their fellowmen as barbarians, and themselves as alone worthy to rule over the earth? What benefit did mankind derive from their boasted institutions? Interrogate the shades of those who fell in the mighty contests between Athens and Lacedæmon, between Carthage and Rome, and between Rome and the rest of the universe. But see William Penn with weaponless hand, sitting down peaceably with his followers in the midst of savage nations, whose only occupation was shedding the blood of their fellowmen, disarming them by his justice, and teaching them, for the first time, to view a stranger without distrust. See them bury their tomahawks in his presence, so deep that man shall never be able to find them again. See them under the shade of the thick groves of Coaquannock extend the bright chain of friendship, and solemnly promise

to preserve it as long as the sun and moon shall endure. See him then with his companions establishing his commonwealth on the sole basis of religion, morality, and universal love, and adopting as the fundamental maxim of his government, the rule handed down to us from heaven, *Glory to God on high, and on earth peace and good will to all men.* Here was a spectacle for the potentates of the earth to look upon, an example for them to imitate. But the potentates of the earth did not see, or if they saw, they turned away their eyes from the sight; they did not hear, or if they heard, they shut their ears against the voice, which called out to them from the wilderness,

Discite justitiam moniti et non temnere Divos.

The character of William Penn alone sheds a never fading lustre on our history."

THE
SANDY FOUNDATION
SHAKEN.



THE
SANDY FOUNDATION
SHAKEN.*

*The Trinity of distinct and separate Persons in the
Unity of Essence, refuted from Scripture.*

“AND he said, Lord God, there is no god like unto thee. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One?†—I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me. Thus saith the Lord thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. I will also praise thee, O my God; unto thee will I sing—O Holy One of Israel. Jehovah shall be One—and

* The original title of this tract at full length is as follows; “The Sandy Foundation Shaken; or those so generally believed and applauded Doctrines,—One God subsisting in three distinct and separate Persons,—The impossibility of God’s pardoning Sinners without a plenary Satisfaction,—The justification of impure Persons by an imputative Righteousness,—confuted from the Authority of Scripture Testimonies and Right Reason. By WILLIAM PENN; a Builder on that Foundation which cannot be moved.”

† 1 Kings viii. 23; Isa. xl. 25.

his name One.”* Which, with a cloud of other testimonies that might be urged, evidently demonstrate, that in the days of the first covenant and prophets, *but One was the Holy God, and God but that Holy One*.—Again, “And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good? there is none good but One, and that is God. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee (Father) the Only true God. Seeing it is one God that shall justify. There be gods many, but unto us there is but One God, the Father, of whom are all things. One God and Father, who is above all. For there is one God. To the Only wise God be glory now and forever.”† From all which I shall lay down this one assertion, that the testimonies of Scripture, both under the law, and since the gospel dispensation, *declare one to be God, and God to be One*, on which I shall raise this argument.

If God, as the Scriptures testify, hath never been declared or believed, but as *the Holy One*; then will it follow, that *God is not an Holy Three*, nor doth subsist in *Three distinct and separate Holy Ones*; but the before cited Scriptures undeniably prove that One is God, and God only is that Holy One; therefore he cannot be divided into, or subsist in an Holy Three, or three distinct and separate Holy Ones. Neither can this receive the least prejudice from that frequent but

* Isa. xlv. 5, 6; xlviii; Psalm lxxi. 22; Zec. xiv. 9.

† Matt. xix. 17; John xvii. 3; Rom. iii. 30; 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6; Eph. iv. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5; Jude v. 25.

impertinent distinction, that He is One in substance, but Three in persons or subsistences ; since God was not declared or believed incompletely, or without his subsistences ; nor did He require homage from his creatures as an incomplete or abstracted Being, but as God the Holy One, for so he should be manifested and worshipped without that which was absolutely necessary to himself ; so that either the testimonies of the aforementioned Scriptures are to be believed concerning God, that he is entirely and completely, not abstractly and distinctly the Holy One ; or else their authority to be denied by these Trinitarians ; and on the contrary, if they pretend to credit those holy testimonies, they must necessarily conclude their kind of trinity a fiction.

Refuted from right Reason.

1. If there be three distinct and separate persons, then three distinct and separate substances, because every person is inseparable from its own substance, and as there is no person that is not a substance in common acceptance among men, so do the Scriptures plentifully agree herein ; and since the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God, (which their opinion necessitates them to confess) then unless the Father, Son and Spirit are three distinct nothings, they must be three distinct substances, and consequently three distinct gods.

2. It is farther proved, if it be considered, that either the divine persons are finite or infinite. If the

first, then something finite is inseparable to the infinite substance, whereby something finite is in God ; if the last, then three distinct infinities, three omnipotents, three eternal, and so three gods.

3. If each person be God, and that God subsists in three persons, then in each person are three persons or gods, and from three they will increase to nine, and so *ad infinitum*.

4. But if they shall deny the three persons or subsistences to be infinite, for so there would unavoidably be three gods, it will follow that they must be finite, and so the absurdity is not abated from what it was ; for that of one substance having three subsistences is not greater than that an infinite being should have three finite modes of subsisting. But though that mode which is finite cannot answer to a substance that is infinite ; yet to try if we can make their principle to consist, let us conceive that three persons, which may be finite separately, make up an infinite conjunctly ; however this will follow, that they are no more incommunicable or separate, nor properly subsistences, but a subsistence ; for the infinite substance cannot find a bottom or subsistence in any one or two, therefore, jointly. And here I am also willing to overlook finiteness in the Father, Son, and Spirit, which this doctrine must suppose.

5. Again, if these three distinct persons are one, with some one thing, as they say they are with the Godhead, then are not they incommunicable among

themselves ; but so much the contrary as to be one in the place of another ; for if that the only God is the Father, and Christ be that only God, then is Christ the Father. So if that one God be the son, and the spirit that one God, then is the spirit the son, and so round. Nor is it possible to stop, or that it should be otherwise, since if the divine nature be inseparable from the three persons, or communicated to each, and each person have the whole divine nature, then is the son in the Father, and the spirit in the son, unless that the Godhead be as incommunicable to the persons, as they are reported to be amongst themselves ; or that the three persons have distinctly allotted them such a proportion of the divine nature, as is not communicable to each other ; which is alike absurd. Much more might be said to manifest the gross contradiction of this trinitarian doctrine, as vulgarly received ; but I must be brief.

Information and Caution.

Before I shall conclude this head, it is requisite I should inform thee, reader, concerning its original. Thou mayest assure thyself, it is not from the Scriptures nor reason, since so expressly repugnant ; although all broachers of their own inventions strongly endeavour to reconcile them with that holy record. Know then, my friend, *it was born above three hundred years after the ancient Gospel was declared ;* and that through the nice distinctions and too daring cu-

riosity of the Bishop of Alexandria, who being as hotly opposed by Arius, their zeal so reciprocally blew the fire of contention, animosity, and persecution, till at last they sacrificed each other to their mutual revenge.

Thus it was conceived in *ignorance*, brought forth and maintained by *cruelty*; for though he that was strongest imposed his opinion, persecuting the contrary, yet the scale turning on the trinitarian side, it has there continued through all the Romish generations; and notwithstanding it hath obtained the name of Athanasian from Athanasius, (a stiff man, witness his carriage towards Constantine the emperor,) because supposed to have been most concerned in the framing that creed in which this doctrine is asserted; yet have I never seen one copy void of a suspicion, rather to have been the results of Popish schoolmen; which I could render more perspicuous did not brevity necessitate me to an omission.

Be therefore cautioned, reader, not to embrace the determination of prejudiced councils for evangelical doctrine, which the Scriptures bear no certain testimony to, neither was believed by the primitive saints, or thus stated by any I have read of in the first, second, or third centuries; particularly Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, with many others, who appear wholly foreign to the matter in controversy. But seeing that private spirits, and those none of the most ingenious, have been the parents and guardians of this so generally received doctrine;

let the time past suffice, and be admonished to apply thy mind unto that light and grace which bring salvation; that by obedience thereunto, those mists tradition hath cast before thy eyes may be expelled, and thou receive a certain knowledge of that God, whom to know is life eternal, not to be divided, but *One pure, entire and eternal Being*, who in the fulness of time *sent forth his Son*, as the true light which enlighteneth every man; that whosoever followed him (the light) might be translated from the dark notions and vain conversations of men to this holy light, in which only sound judgment and eternal life are obtainable; who so many hundred years since, in person, testified the virtue of it, and has communicated unto all, such a proportion as may enable them to follow his example.



The vulgar Doctrine of Satisfaction, being dependent on the second Person of the Trinity, refuted from Scripture.

DOCTRINE.

‘**THAT** man having transgressed the righteous law of God, and so exposed to the penalty of eternal wrath, it is altogether impossible for God to remit or forgive without a plenary satisfaction; and that there was no other way by which God could obtain satisfaction, or save men, than by inflicting the penalty of infinite wrath and vengeance on Jesus Christ, the

second person of the trinity, who, for sins past, present, and to come, hath wholly borne and paid it, whether for all, or but some, to the offended infinite justice of his Father.'

1. "And the Lord passed by before him (Moses) and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."* From whence I shall draw this position; that since God has proclaimed himself a gracious, merciful, and forgiving God, it is not inconsistent with his nature to remit without any other consideration than his own love; otherwise He could not justly come under the imputation of so many gracious attributes, with whom it is impossible to pardon, and necessary to exact the payment of the utmost farthing.

2. "For if ye turn again to the Lord, the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you."† Where, how natural is it to observe, that God's remission is grounded on their repentance; and not that it is impossible for God to pardon without plenary satisfaction, since the possibility, nay certainty of the contrary, viz. his grace and mercy, is the great motive or reason of that loving invitation to return.

3. "They hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments; but Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful."‡ Can the honest-

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. † 2 Chron. xxx. 9. ‡ Neh. ix. 16, 17.

hearted reader conceive, that God should thus be mercifully qualified, whilst executing the rigour of the law transgressed, or not acquitting without the debt be paid him by another? I suppose not.

4. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."* Come, let the unprejudiced judge, if this scripture doctrine is not very remote from saying, his nature cannot forgive sin, therefore let Christ pay him full satisfaction, or He will certainly be avenged; which is the substance of that strange opinion.

5. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; I will put my law in their inward parts; I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."† Here is God's mere grace asserted, against the pretended necessity of a satisfaction to procure his remission; and this Paul acknowledgeth to be the dispensation of the Gospel, in his eighth chapter to the Hebrews; so that this new doctrine doth not only contradict the nature and design of the second covenant, but seems, in short, to discharge God both from his mercy and omnipotence.

6. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for-

* Isa. iv. 7.

† Jer. xxxi. 31, 33, 34.

ever, because He delighteth in mercy.”* Can there be a more express passage to clear, not only the possibility, but real inclinations in God to pardon sin, and “not retain his anger for ever?” Since the prophet seems to challenge all other gods, to try their excellency by his God; herein describing the supremacy of his power and super-excellency of his nature, that “He pardoneth iniquity, and retaineth not his anger forever.” So that if the satisfactionists should ask the question, who is a God like unto ours, that cannot pardon iniquity, nor pass by transgression, but retaineth his anger until somebody make him satisfaction? I answer, many amongst the harsh and severe rulers of the nation; but as for my God, He is exalted above them all, upon the throne of his mercy, “who pardoneth iniquity, and retaineth not his anger forever, but will have compassion upon us.”

7. “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”† Where nothing can be more obvious, than that which is forgiven, is not paid; and if it is our duty to forgive our debtors, without a satisfaction received, and that God is to forgive us, as we forgive them, then is a satisfaction totally excluded. Christ farther paraphrases upon that part of his prayer, ver. 14, “For if ye forgive their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” Where he as well argues the equity of God’s forgiving them from their forgiving others, as he encourages them to forgive

* Micah vii. 18.

† Matt. vi. 12.

others from the example of God's mercy in forgiving them ; which is more amply expressed, chap. xviii. where the kingdom of heaven, that consists in righteousness, is represented by a king, "who, upon his debtor's petition, had compassion, and forgave him ; but the same treating his fellow servant without the least forbearance, the king condemned his unrighteousness, and delivered him over to the tormentors." But how had this been a fault in the servant, if his king's mercy had not been proposed for his example ? How most unworthy therefore is it of God, and blasphemous, may I justly term it, for any to assert, that forgiveness impossible to God, which is not only possible, but enjoined to men !

8. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* By which it appears that God's love is not the effect of Christ's satisfaction, but Christ is the proper gift and effect of God's love.

9. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins."† So that remission came by believing his testimony, and obeying his precepts, and not by a strict satisfaction.

10. "If God be for us, who can be against us ? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for

* John iii. 16.

† Acts x. 43.

us all.”* Which evidently declares it to be God’s act of love, otherwise, if he must be paid, he should be at the charge of his own satisfaction, for he delivered up the Son.

11. “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”† How undeniably apparent is it, that God is so far from standing off in high displeasure, and upon his own terms contracting with his Son for a satisfaction, as being otherwise incapable to be reconciled, that he became himself the reconciler by Christ, and afterwards by the apostles, his ambassadors, to whom was committed the ministry of reconciliation !

12. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”‡ Now what relation satisfaction has to forgiveness of sins, or how any can construe grace to be strict justice, the meanest understanding may determine.

13. “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus.”§ He does not say that God’s justice, in consideration of Christ’s satisfaction, acquitted us from sins past, present, and to come, and therefore hath called us to his eternal glory ; but from his grace.

* Rom. viii. 31, 32. † 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. ‡ Eph. i. 7. § 1 Pet. v. 10.

14. "In this was manifest the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."* Which plainly attributes Christ, in his doctrine, life, miracles, death, and sufferings, to God, as the gift and expression of his eternal love, for the salvation of men.

1. In abolishing that other covenant, which consisted in external and shadowy ordinances, and that made none clean as concerning the conscience.

2. In promulgating his message, of a most free and universal tender of life and salvation, unto all that believed and followed him, (the light) in all his righteousness, the very end of his appearance being to destroy the works of the devil, and which every man only comes to experience, as he walks in an holy subjection to that measure of light and grace, wherewith the fulness hath enlightened him.

3. In seconding his doctrines with signs, miracles, and a most innocent selfdenying life.

4. In ratifying and confirming all, with great love and holy resignation, by the offering up of his body to be crucified by wicked hands; who is now ascended far above all heavens, and is thereby become a most complete captain, and perfect example.

So that I can by no means conclude, but openly declare, that the Scriptures of truth are not only silent in reference to this doctrine of rigid satisfaction, but

* 1 John iv. 9.

that it is altogether inconsistent with the dignity of God, and very repugnant to the conditions, nature, and tendency of that second covenant, concerning which their testimony is so clear.

The Absurdities, that unavoidably follow the Comparison of this Doctrine with the Sense of Scripture.

1. THAT God is gracious to forgive, and yet it is impossible for him, unless the debt be fully satisfied.

2. That the finite and impotent creature is more capable of extending mercy and forgiveness, than the infinite and omnipotent Creator.

3. "That God so loved the world, he gave his only Son to save it;" and yet that God stood off in high displeasure, and Christ gave himself to God as a complete satisfaction to his offended justice; with many more such like gross consequences that might be drawn.

Refuted from right Reason.

But if we should grant a scripture silence, as to the necessity of Christ's so satisfying his Father's justice; yet so manifest would be the contradictions, and foul the repugnances to right reason, that he who had not veiled his understanding with the dark suggestions of unwarrantable tradition, or contracted his judgment to the implicit apprehensions of some over valued acquaintance, might with great facility discriminate to a

full resolution in this point ; for admitting God to be a creator, or he to whom the debt should be paid ; and Christ, he that satisfies or pays it on the behalf of man, the debtor ; this question will arise, Whether he paid that debt *as God*, or *man*, or *both* ? (to use their own terms.)

Not as God.

1. In that it divides the unity of the Godhead, by two distinct acts, of being offended and not offended ; of condemning justice and redeeming mercy ; of requiring a satisfaction and then making it.

2. Because if Christ pay the debt *as God*, then the Father and the Spirit being God, they also pay the debt.

3. Since God is to be satisfied, and that Christ is God, he consequently is to be satisfied ; and who shall satisfy his infinite justice ?

4. But if Christ has satisfied God the Father, Christ being also God, it will follow then that he has satisfied himself, which cannot be.

5. But since God the Father was once to be satisfied, and that it is impossible he should do it himself, nor yet the Son or Spirit, because the same God ; it naturally follows, that the debt remains unpaid, and these satisfactionists thus far are still at a loss.

Not as Man.

6. The justice offended being infinite, his satisfaction ought to bear a proportion therewith, which Jesus

Christ, *as man*, could never pay, he being finite, and from a finite cause could not proceed an infinite effect; for so man may be said to bring forth God, since nothing below the Divinity itself can rightly be styled infinite.

Not as God and Man.

7. For where two mediums, or middle propositions, are singly inconsistent with the nature of the end for which they were at first propounded, their conjunction does rather augment than lessen the difficulty of its accomplishment; and this I am persuaded must be obvious to every unbiassed understanding.

But admitting one of these three mediums possible for the payment of an infinite debt; yet, pray observe the most unworthy and ridiculous consequences, that unavoidably will attend the impossibility of God's pardoning sinners without a satisfaction.

Consequences irreligious and irrational.

1. That it is unlawful and impossible for God Almighty to be gracious and merciful, or to pardon transgressors; than which what is more unworthy of God?

2. That God was inevitably compelled to this way of saving men; the highest affront to his uncontrollable nature.

3. That it was unworthy of God to pardon, but not to inflict punishment on the innocent, or require a satisfaction where there was nothing due.

4. It doth not only disacknowledge the true virtue and real intent of Christ's life and death, but entirely deprives God of that praise which is owing to his greatest love and goodness.

5. It represents the Son more kind and compassionate than the Father; whereas, if both be the same God, then either the Father is as loving as the Son, or the Son as angry as the Father.

6. It robs God of the gift of his Son for our redemption (which the Scriptures attribute to the unmerited love he had for the world), in affirming the Son purchased that redemption from the Father, by the gift of himself to God, as our complete satisfaction.

7. Since Christ could not pay what was not his own, it follows, that in the payment of his own, the case still remains equally grievous; since the debt is not hereby absolved or forgiven, but transferred only; and by consequence we are no better provided for salvation than before, owing *that* now to the Son, which was once owing to the Father.

8. It no way renders man beholding, [beholden] or in the least obliged to God; since by their doctrine He would not have abated us, nor did He Christ the last farthing; so that the acknowledgments are peculiarly the Son's, which destroys the whole current of scripture testimony for his good will towards men. O the infamous protraiture this doctrine draws of the Infinite Goodness! Is this your retribution, O injurious satisfactionists?

9. That God's justice is satisfied for sins past, present, and to come ; whereby God and Christ have lost both their power of enjoining godliness, and all prerogative of punishing disobedience ; for what is once paid is not revokable ; and if punishment should arrest any for their debts, it either argues a breach on God's or Christ's part, or else that it has not been sufficiently solved, and the penalty completely sustained by another ; forgetting "that every one must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body ; yea, every one must give an account of himself to God."* But many more are the gross absurdities and blasphemies, that are the genuine fruits of this so confidently believed doctrine of satisfaction.

Caution.

Let me advise, nay warn thee, reader, by no means to admit an entertainment of this principle, by whomsoever recommended ; since it does not only divest the glorious God of his sovereign power, both to pardon and punish, but as certainly insinuates a licentiousness, at least a liberty, that unbecomes the nature of that ancient Gospel once preached amongst the primitive saints, and that from an apprehension of a satisfaction once paid for all. Whereas I must tell thee, that unless thou seriously repent, and no more grieve God's holy Spirit, placed in thy inmost parts,

* 2 Cor. xv. 10 ; Rom. xiv. 12.

but art thereby taught to deny all ungodliness, and led into all righteousness ; at the tribunal of the great Judge, thy plea shall prove invalid, and thou receive thy reward without respect to any other thing than the deeds done in the body. “ Be not deceived, God will not be mocked ; such as thou sowest, such shalt thou reap ;”* which leads me to the consideration of my third head, viz. ‘ Justification by an imputative righteousness.’



The Justification of impure Persons, by an imputative Righteousness, refuted from Scripture.

DOCTRINE.

‘ THAT there is no other way for sinners to be justified in the sight of God, than by the imputation of that righteousness of Christ, so long since performed personally ; and that sanctification is consequential, not antecedent.’

1. “ Keep thee far from a false matter ; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not ; for I will not justify the wicked.”† Whereon I ground this argument, that since God has prescribed an inoffensive life, as that which can only give acceptance with Him, and on the contrary hath determined never to justify the wicked ; then will it necessarily follow, that unless this so much believed imputative righteousness had

* Gal. vi. 7.

† Exod. xxiii. 7.

that effectual influence, as to regenerate and redeem the soul from sin, on which the malediction lies, he is as far to seek for justification as before ; for whilst a person is really guilty of a false matter, I positively assert, from the authority and force of this scripture, he cannot be in a state of justification ; and as God will not justify the wicked, so, by the acknowledged reason of contraries, the just He will never condemn, but they, and they only, are the justified of God.

2. "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."* It would very opportunely be observed, that if it is so great an abomination in men to justify the wicked, and condemn the just, how much greater would it be in God, which this doctrine of imputative righteousness necessarily does imply, that so far disengages God from the person justified, as that his guilt shall not condemn him, nor his innocency justify him? But will not the abomination appear greatest of all, when God shall be found condemning the just, on purpose to justify the wicked, and that He is thereto compelled, or else no salvation ; which is the tendency of their doctrine, 'who imagine the righteous and merciful God to condemn and punish his innocent Son, that he having satisfied for our sins, we might be justified (whilst unsanctified) by the imputation of his perfect righteousness.' *O ! why should this horrible thing be contended for by Christians ?*

* Prov. xvii. 15.

3. "The son shall not bear the iniquity of his father; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; yet saith the house of Israel, the ways of the Lord are not equal; are not my ways equal?"* If this was once equal, it is so still, for God is unchangeable; and therefore I shall draw this argument, that the condemnation or justification of persons, is not from the imputation of another's righteousness, but the actual performance and keeping of God's righteous statutes or commandments, otherwise God should forget to be equal; therefore how wickedly unequal are those, who, not from scripture evidences, but their own dark conjectures and interpretations of obscure passages would frame a doctrine so manifestly inconsistent with God's most pure and equal nature; making him to condemn the righteous to death, and justify the wicked to life, from the imputation of another's righteousness;—a most unequal way indeed!

4. "Not every-one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father. Whosoever heareth

* Ezek. xviii. 20, 26, 27, 29.

these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock," &c.* How very fruitful are the Scriptures of truth, in testimonies against this absurd and dangerous doctrine! These words seem to import a twofold righteousness; the first consists in sacrifice, the last in obedience; the one makes a talking, the other a doing Christian. I, in short, argue thus; if none can enter into the kingdom of heaven, but they that do the Father's will, then none are justified, but they who do the Father's will, because none can enter into the kingdom but such as are justified. Since therefore there can be no admittance had, without performing that righteous will, and doing those holy and perfect sayings; alas! to what value will an imputative righteousness amount, when a poor soul shall awake polluted in his sin, by the hasty calls of death, to make its appearance before the judgment seat, where it is impossible to justify the wicked, or that any should escape uncondemned, but such as do the will of God?

5. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."† From whence this argument doth naturally arise; if none are truly justified that abide not in Christ's love, and that none abide in his love who keep not his commandments;

* Matt. vii. 21, 24, 25.

† 1 John xvi. 10.

then consequently none are justified but such as keep his commandments. Besides, here is the most palpable opposition to an imputative righteousness that may be; for Christ is so far from telling them of such a way of being justified, as that he informs them the reason why he abode in his Father's love, was his obedience; and is so far from telling them of their being justified, whilst not abiding in his love, by virtue of his obedience imputed unto them, that unless they keep his commands, and obey for themselves, they shall be so remote from an acceptance, as wholly to be cast out; in all which Christ is our example.

6. "Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you."* We have almost here the very words, but altogether the same matter, which affords us thus much, that without being Christ's friends, there is no being justified; but unless we keep his commandments, it is impossible we should be his friends; it therefore necessarily follows, that except we keep his commandments, there is no being justified; or in short, thus; if the way to be a friend is, to keep the commandments, then the way to be justified is to keep the commandments; because none can obtain the quality of a friend, and remain unjustified, or be truly justified whilst an enemy; which he certainly is that keeps not the commandments.

* John xv. 14.

7. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."* From whence how unanswerably may I observe, unless we become doers of that law, which Christ came not to destroy, but as our example to fulfil, we can never be justified before God; wherefore obedience is so absolutely necessary, that short of it there can be no acceptance. Nor let any fancy that Christ hath so fulfilled it for them, as to exclude their obedience from being requisite to their acceptance but as their pattern; "for unless ye follow me," saith Christ, "ye cannot be my disciples;" and it is not only repugnant to reason, but in this place particularly refuted; for if Christ had fulfilled it on our behalf and we not enabled to follow his example, there would not be doers, but one doer only, of the law, justified before God. In short, if without obedience to the righteous law none can be justified, then all our hearing of the law, with but the mere imputation of another's righteousness, whilst we are actually breakers of it, is excluded, as not justifying before God. "If you fulfil the royal law, ye do well; so speak ye, and so do ye, as they that shall be judged thereby."

8. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."† No man can be dead, and justified before God, for so he may be justified that

* Rom. ii. 13.

† Rom. viii. 13.

lives after the flesh ; therefore they only can be justified that are alive ; from whence this follows, if the living are justified and not the dead, and that none can live to God but such as have mortified the deeds of the body through the spirit, then none can be justified but they who have mortified the deeds of the body through the spirit ; so that justification does not go before, but is subsequential to the mortification of lusts and sanctification of the soul, through the spirit's operation.

9. "For as many as are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God."* How clearly will it appear to any but a cavilling and tenacious spirit, that man can be no farther justified, than as he becomes obedient to the spirit's leadings ; for if none can be a son of God but he that is led by the spirit of God, then none can be justified without being led by the spirit of God, because none can be justified but he that is a son of God ; so that the way to justification and sonship is through obedience to the spirit's leadings, that is, manifesting the holy fruits thereof by an innocent life and conversation.

10. "But let every man prove his own work, then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Be not deceived, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap."† If rejoicing and acceptance with God, or the contrary, are to be reaped

* Rom. viii. 14.

† Gal. vi 4, 7.

from the work that man soweth, either to the flesh or to the spirit, then is the doctrine of acceptance, and ground of rejoicing, from the works of another, utterly excluded, every man reaping according to what he hath sown, and bearing his own burden.

11. "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."* He that will seriously peruse this chapter, shall doubtless find some to whom this epistle was wrote, of the same spirit with the satisfactionists and imputarians of our time—they fain would have found out a justification from faith in the imputation of another's righteousness; but James, an apostle of the Most High God, who experimentally knew what true faith and justification meant, gave them to understand from Abraham's selfdenying example, that unless their faith in the purity and power of God's grace, had that effectual operation to subdue every beloved lust, wean from every Delilah, and entirely to resign and sacrifice Isaac himself, their faith was a fable, or as a body without a spirit; and as righteousness therefore in one person cannot justify another from unrighteousness; so whoever now pretends to be justified by faith, whilst not led and guided by the spirit into all the ways of truth and works of righteousness, their faith they will find at last a fiction.

* James ii. 21, 24.

12. "Little children, let no man deceive you ; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, as God is righteous, (but) he that committeth sin is of the devil."* From whence it may be very clearly argued, that none can be in a state of justification, from the righteousness performed by another imputed unto them, but as they are actually redeemed from the commission of sin ; for "if he that committeth sin is of the devil," then cannot any be justified completely before God, who is so incompletely redeemed, as yet to be under the captivity of lust, since then the devil's seed or offspring may be justified ; but that is impossible ; it therefore follows, that as he who doeth righteousness is righteous, as God is righteous, so no farther is he like God, or justifiable ; for in whatsoever he derogates from the works of that faith which is held in a pure conscience, he is no longer righteous or justified, but under condemnation as a transgressor, or disobedient person, to the righteous commandment ; and if any would obtain the true state of justification, let them circumspectly observe the holy guidings and instructions of that unction, to which the apostle recommended the ancient churches, that thereby they may be led out of all ungodliness into truth and holiness, so shall they find acceptance with the Lord, who has determined never to justify the wicked.

* John iii. 7, 8

Refuted from right Reason.

1. Because it is impossible for God to justify that which is both opposite and destructive to the purity of his own nature, as this doctrine necessarily obliges him to do, in accepting the wicked, as not such, from the imputation of another's righteousness.

2. Since man was justified before God, whilst in his native innocency, and never condemned till he had erred from that pure state ; he never can be justified, whilst in the frequent commission of that for which the condemnation came ; therefore, to be justified, his redemption must be as entire as his fall.

3. Because sin came not by imputation, but actual transgression ; for God did not condemn his creature for what he did not, but what he did ; therefore must the righteousness be as personal for acceptance, otherwise these two things will necessarily follow ; first, that he may be actually a sinner, and yet not under the curse ; secondly, that the power of the first Adam to death was more prevalent than the power of the second Adam unto life.

4. It is therefore contrary to sound reason, that if actual sinning brought death and condemnation, any thing besides actual obedience unto righteousness should bring life and justification ; for death and life, condemnation and justification being vastly opposite, no man can be actually dead and imputatively alive ; therefore this doctrine, so much contended for, carries this gross absurdity with it, that a man may be actually

sinful, yet imputatively righteous ; actually judged and condemned, yet imputatively justified and glorified ; in short, he may be actually damned, and yet imputatively saved ; otherwise it must be acknowledged, that obedience to justification ought to be as personally extensive, as was disobedience to condemnation ; in which real, not imputative sense, those various terms of sanctification, righteousness, resurrection, life, redemption, justification, &c. are most infallibly to be understood.

5. Nor are those words, *impute*, *imputed*, *imputeth*, *imputing*, used in Scripture by way of opposition to that which is actual and inherent, as the assertors of an imputative righteousness do by their doctrine plainly intimate ; but so much the contrary, as that they are never mentioned, but to express men really and personally to be that which is imputed to them, whether as guilty, as remitted, or as righteous. For instance ; “ What man soever of the house of Israel that killeth an ox, and bringeth it not to the door of the tabernacle to offer unto the Lord, blood shall be imputed unto that man,”* or charged upon him as guilty thereof. “ And Shimei said unto the king, let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, for thy servant doth know that I have sinned.”†

6. “ But sin is not imputed where there is no law.”‡ From whence it is apparent that there could be no im-

* Lev. xvii. 3, 4. † 2 Sam. xix. 18—20. ‡ Rom. v. 13.

putation or charging of guilt upon any, but such as really were guilty. Next, it is used about remission; "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity;"* or as the foregoing words have it, "whose transgression is forgiven." Where the non-imputation doth not argue a nonreality of sin, but the reality of God's pardon; for otherwise there would be nothing to forgive, nor yet a real pardon, but only imputative, which, according to the sense of this doctrine, I call imaginary. Again, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."† Where also nonimputation, being a real discharge for actual trespasses, argues an imputation, by the reason of contraries, to be a real charging of actual guilt. Lastly, it is used in relation to righteousness; "Was not Abraham justified by works, when he offered Isaac? And by works was faith made perfect, and the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."‡ By which we must not conceive, as do the dark imputarians of this age, that Abraham's offering personally was not a justifying righteousness, but that God was pleased to account it so; since God never accounts a thing that which it is not; nor was there any imputation of another's righteousness to Abraham, but on the contrary, his personal obedience was the ground of that

* Ps. xxxii. 2.

† 2 Cor. v. 19.

‡ James ii. 21—23.

just imputation; and therefore, that any should be justified from the imputation of another's righteousness, not inherent, or actually possessed by them, is both ridiculous and dangerous—Ridiculous, since it is to say a man is rich to the value of a thousand pounds, whilst he is not really or personally worth a groat, from the imputation of another, who has it all in his possession—Dangerous, because it begets a confident persuasion in many people of their being justified, whilst in captivity to those lusts whose reward is condemnation; whence came that usual saying amongst many professors of religion, “that God looks not on them as they are in themselves, but as they are in Christ;” not considering that none can be in Christ, who are not new creatures, which those cannot be reputed, who have not disrobed themselves of their old garments, but are still inmantled with the corruptions of the old man.

Consequences irreligious and irrational.

1. It makes God guilty of what the Scriptures say is an abomination, to wit, that he justifieth the wicked.

2. It makes him look upon persons as they are not, or with respect, which is unworthy of his most equal nature.

3. He is hereby at peace with the wicked, (if justified whilst sinners,) who said, “there is no peace to the wicked.”

4. It does not only imply communion with them here, in an imperfect state, but so to all eternity; “for

whom he justified, them he also glorified.”* Therefore whom he justified whilst sinners, them he also glorified whilst sinners.

5. It only secures from the wages, not the dominion of sin; whereby something that is sinful comes to be justified, and that which defileth, to enter God’s kingdom.

6. It renders a man justified and condemned, dead and alive, redeemed and not redeemed, at the same time; the one by an imputative righteousness, the other a personal unrighteousness.

7. It flatters men, whilst subject to the world’s lusts, with a state of justification, and thereby invalidates the very end of Christ’s appearance, which was to destroy the works of the devil, and take away the sins of the world; a quite contrary purpose than what the satisfactionists and imputarians of our times have imagined, viz. to satisfy for their sins, and by his imputed righteousness to represent them holy in him, whilst unholy in themselves; therefore, since it was to take away sin and destroy the devil’s works, which were not in himself, for that Holy One saw no corruption, consequently, in mankind; what can therefore be concluded more evidently true, than that such in whom sin is not taken away, and the devil’s works undestroyed, are strangers, notwithstanding their conceits, to the very end and purpose of Christ’s manifestation?

* Rom. viii. 30.

Conclusion, by way of Caution.

Thus, reader, have I led thee through those three so generally applauded doctrines, whose confutation I hope, though thou hast run, thou hast read ; and now I call the righteous God of heaven to bear me record, that I have herein sought nothing below the defence of his unity, mercy, and purity, against the rude and impetuous assaults of tradition, press, and pulpit, from whence I daily hear, what rationally induceth me to believe, a conspiracy is held by counterplots to obstruct the exaltation of truth, and to betray evangelical doctrines to idle traditions ; but God will rebuke the winds, and destruction shall attend the enemies of his anointed. Mistake me not, we never have disowned a Father, Word, and Spirit, which are One, but men's inventions ; for, 1. Their trinity has not so much as a foundation in the Scriptures. 2. Its original was three hundred years after Christianity was in the world. 3. It having cost much blood ; in the council of Sirmium, anno 355, it was decreed, "that thenceforth the controversy should not be remembered, because the Scriptures of God made no mention thereof."* Why, then, should it be mentioned now, with a *maranatha* on all that will not bow to this abstruse opinion ? 4. And it doubtless hath occasioned idolatry ; witness the Popish images of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 5. It scandalizeth Turks, Jews, and Infidels, and pal-

* Socrat. Schol. An. 355. Conc. Sirm. Cap. xxv. p. 275.

pably obstructs their reception of the Christian doctrine. Nor is there more to be said on the behalf of the other two ; for I can boldly challenge any person to give me one scripture phrase, which does approach the doctrine of satisfaction, much less the name, considering to what degree it is stretched ; not that we do deny, but really confess, that Jesus Christ, in life, doctrine, and death, fulfilled his Father's will, and offered up a most satisfactory sacrifice, but not to pay God, or help him, as otherwise being unable, to save men. And for a justification by an imputative righteousness, whilst not real, it is merely an imagination, not a reality, and therefore rejected ; otherwise confessed and known to be justifying before God, because " there is no abiding in Christ's love without keeping his commandments." I therefore caution thee in love, of whatsoever tribe or family in religion thou mayest be, not longer to deceive thyself by the over fond embraces of human apprehensions for divine mysteries ; but rather be informed that God hath bestowed " a measure of his grace on thee and me, to shew us what is good, that we may obey and do it ;" which if thou diligently wilt observe, thou shalt be led out of all unrighteousness, and in thy obedience shalt thou " receive power to become a son of God ;" in which happy estate God only can be known by men, and they know themselves to be justified before him, whom experimentally to know, by Jesus Christ, is life eternal.

CREEDS

SHOULD BE EXPRESSED IN THE

LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

FROM WILLIAM PENN'S ADDRESS TO PROTESTANTS.

OPINIONS pass for faith, and are made articles of faith, and are enjoined to be embraced as the bond of communion.

That this is so, let us take the most impartial view we can, and we shall find it to be true, both of the national and many other select societies. That I may be understood in the signification of the word *opinions*, I explain it thus ; *Opinions are all those propositions, or conclusions, made by men doctrines of faith and articles of communion, which either are not expressly laid down in Scripture, or not so evidently deducible from Scripture, as to leave no occasion of doubt of the truth of them in their minds who sincerely and reverently believe the text ; or, lastly, such as have no new or credible revelation to vouch them.*

That this is our case, let the several confessions of faith, published by almost every party in England, be

perused, and you will find such propositions translated into doctrines of faith and articles of communion, as are, first, not only *not expressed* in Scripture, but, perhaps not well deducible *from* Scripture; and if one party may be but believed against another, we can want no evidence to prove what we say. And, in the next place, such as are, though not expressed, yet, it may be, deducible as to the matter of them, are either carried so high, spun so fine, or so disguised by barbarous school terms, that they are rather a bone of contention, than a bond of concord to religious societies. Yet this has been the unhappiness even of this kingdom, after all the light of reformation, which God hath graciously sent amongst us, “Men are to be received or rejected for denying or owning of such propositions.” Wilt thou be a Presbyterian? Embrace and keep the covenant, subscribe the Westminster confession and directory; and so on to the end of every society that grounds communion upon conformity to such propositions and articles of faith.

What a stir have we had in England about the word *Επίσκοπος*. He that says it signifies an higher office than *Πρεσβύτερος*, shall have no part or fellowship with us; on the other hand, they that will debase *Episcopos* to *Presbuteros*, and turn levellers or degraders of episcopal dignity, shall be excommunicated, silenced, punished. Is not this plain fact? Can any deny it, that love truth more than a party? The fire kindled by this contention hath warmed the hands

of violence ; it had been well if men had entertained equal zeal against impiety, and been but half as much enemies to sin, as they have been against one another on such accounts.

If we look a little back, we shall find, that the debate of *freewill* and *unconditional reprobation* filled this kingdom with uncharitableness and division. In the archepiscopacy of Abbot, reputed in himself a good man, whosoever held, "that Christ so died for all men, that all men might be saved, if they would accept the means, and that none were absolutely decreed to eternal reprobation," was reputed a heretic, and excommunicated, as an enemy to the free grace of God ; which, it seems, at that time of day, lay in being *narrow*.

In the reign of archbishop Laud the tide turned ; and those that held an *absolute election* and *reprobation*, without regard had to the good or evil actions of men and asserted that Christ only died for the *elect*, and not for *all*, must be discountenanced, displaced, and pointed at as men out of fashion, though at the same time conscientious, sober, and, at worst, mistaken ; and to be pitied, rather than persecuted ; and informed, not destroyed.

This controversy begat the Synod of Dort ; he that reads the epistles of that judicious man J. Hales, of Eton College, upon the matter and conduct of that assembly, will find cause of being sad at heart ; too many of them talking of religion without the spirit of

it ; men, perhaps, learned in books, but few of the sticklers gave any great testimony of their proficiency in that science, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated. This flame, kindled between Arminius and Episcopius, &c. for the Remonstrants, and Gomarus, Sibrandus, &c. for the Predestinarians, distracted Holland not a little, and had an ill influence upon the affairs of England, at least so far as concerned the church. But the mournfullest part of that history is the ill usage Martinus Crocius, the bishop of Landaff, and others had ; who, though they were acknowledged to be sound in the faith of those things, which generally followed the judgment of Calvin, as to the main points controverted, yet, if at any time they appeared moderate in their behaviour, gentle in their words, and for accommodation in some particulars, with the remonstrants, or free-willers, Gomarus and his followers, not observing the gravity due to the assembly, the rules of debate, and least of all the meekness of christian communion, fell foul of their brethren, reproached their tenderness, and began to fix treachery upon their sober endeavours of accommodation ; as if they intended to execute, as well as maintain, their reprobation, and blow up their friends, rather than not destroy their adversaries.

But if we will rise higher in our inquiry, and view the mischiefs of earlier times, flowing from this practice, the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ will

furnish us with instances enough. We cannot possibly forget the heavy life some men made about the observation of *Easter day*, as if their eternal happiness had been in jeopardy ; for so far were they degenerated from the love and meekness of Christianity, that about keeping of a day, which perhaps was no part, but, to be sure, no essential part, of the christian religion, they fell to pieces ; reproached, reviled, hated, and persecuted one another. “A DAY” was more to them, than “Christ,” who was the Lord and end of days ; and “victory over brethren,” sweeter than the “Peace and concord of the church,” the great command of Jesus, whom they called Lord.

But the remarkable and tragical story of Alexander bishop of Alexandria, and Arius his priest, in their known debate about the “nature and existence of the son of God,” with the lamentable consequences thereof, as all writers upon that subject have related, witnesseth to the truth of what I say. The bishop’s curiosity, and the strictness of Arius ; the presumption of the one to expound beyond the evidence and simplicity of the text, and the captious humour of the other, that would not abate the bishop anything for his age, or the rank he held in the church, but logically exacted the utmost farthing of the reckoning from his old pastor, first began the fray, which as it became the perplexity of church and state for some ages, so it raged to blood ; and those that had been persecuted like sheep by the hea-

then not long before, turned wolves against each other, and made sport for the infidels, doing their work to their own destruction. Nay, so much more Christian was Themistius the philosopher, that he, in his oration, called *Consul*, commended the emperor Jovianus for his moderation, and advised him to give that liberty of conscience, which professed Christians refused to allow each other; who seemed to think they never did God better service, than in sacrificing one another for religion, even as soon as ever they had escaped the heathen's shambles.

Did we duly reflect upon the unnatural heats, divisions, and excommunications among them, the many councils that were called, the strong and tedious debates held, the translations of sees, the anathemas, the banishments, wars, sackings, fires, and bloodshed, that followed this unnatural division, that sprang from so nice a controversy, one would verily believe no less, than that religion itself had been in the utmost hazard; that Judaism or Paganism were overrunning Christianity; and not that all this stir had been made about an *Iota*. For the whole question was, whether *Homousia*, or *Homoiousia*, should be received for faith? In which the difference is but the single letter *I*; certainly, we must do violence to our understanding, if we can think that these men were followers of that Jesus, that "loved his enemies, and gave his blood for the world," who hated their brethren, and shed one another's blood for *opinions*; the heathen

philosophers never were so barbarous to one another, but maintained a better understanding and behaviour in their differences.

But how easily might all these confusions have been prevented, if their faith about Christ had been delivered in the words of the *Scripture* ; since all sides pretend to believe the *text* ? And why should any man presume to be wiser, or plainer in matters of faith, than the Holy Ghost ? It is strange, that God and Christ should be wanting to express or discover their own mind ; or that the words used by the Holy Ghost should have that shortness, ambiguity, or obliquity in them, that *our* frail capacities should be needed to make them more easy, proper, and intelligible. But that we should scarcely deliver any one article of faith in *scripture terms*, and yet make such acts the *rule and bond of christian communion*, is, in my judgment, an offence heinous against God and holy Scripture, and very injurious to christian charity and fellowship. Who can express any man's mind so fully as himself ? And shall we allow that liberty to ourselves, and refuse it to God ? "The Scriptures came not in old time," said the apostle Peter, "by the will of *man* ; but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*." Who can speak better, or express the mind of the Holy Ghost plainer, than the *Holy Ghost* ? The Scripture is the great record of truth, that which all these parties in controversy agree to be *the declared mind and will of God*, and

they unanimously say, it ought to be *believed* and professed as *such*. If this be true, in what language can we so safely and properly declare our belief of those truths, as in the very language of the *Scripture*?

And I cannot see how those persons can be excused in the day of God's judgment, who make men heterodox or heretical, for refusing to subscribe their articles of faith that are not in *scripture terms*, who in the same time offer to declare their belief of God, Christ, spirit, man's lapse or fall, repentance, sanctification, justification, salvation, resurrection, and eternal recompense, in the language of holy Scripture. I must say it is preposterous, and a contradiction, that those who desire to deliver their *faith* of truth, in the *language* of truth, shall not be reputed *true believers*, nor their *faith* admitted. This were to say, that therefore their faith is not to be received, because it is declared in the *language* of that very *truth*, which is the *object* of that *faith*, for which it ought to be received, and which is, on all hands, concluded to be our duty to believe. It seems then, we must not express our belief of God in *his* words but our *own*; nor is the Scripture a creed plain or proper enough to declare a true believer, or an orthodox Christian, without our glosses.

Are not things come to a sad pass, that to refuse any other terms than those the Holy Ghost has given us, and which are confessed to be the "rule or form of sound words," is to expose a man to the censure

of being unsound in the faith, and unfit for christian communion? Will nothing do but *man's comment* instead of *God's text*? *His consequences* and *conclusions*, in the room of *sacred revelation*? I cannot see how any man can be obliged to *receive*, or *believe* revealed truths in any *other* language than that of the revelation *itself*; especially if those that vary the expression have not the same spirit to lead them in doing so, or that it appears not to me that they have the guidance of that holy spirit. If the Holy Ghost had left *doubts* in Scripture, which is yet irreverent to believe, I see not how *men* can resolve them; it is the *work* of that *spirit*. And since men are so apt to err, doubts are better left in *Scripture*, than made or left by *us*. But it is to cross that order of prudence and wisdom among men, who choose to conform their *expressions* to the thing they *believe*. If an honest man hath related a *story* to me, of something he hath seen, and I am to declare my *faith* about it, if I believe the *fact*, I will choose to deliver it in the *terms* of the *relator*, as being nearest to the truth.

Suppose a father, dying, makes his *last will* and *testament*, and as he thinks so plain, that there can be no mistake made by the *executors*, but what is wilful; if they, instead of proving this will and acting according to the plainness of it, turn *commentators*, make more difficulties than they find, and perplex the whole matter to the children and legatees, and send them to the *law* for right; will we not esteem such

executors *ill* men, and justify those persons concerned in their *refusal* of their *paraphrase*? “God hath, at sundry times, and in diverse manners,” by his prophets, his beloved Son, and his Apostles,* delivered to the world a *declaration* of his blessed *will*; but some have claimed and taken to themselves the *keeping, explanation, and use* of it, so as those that choose to be concluded by the *letter and text* of *Christ’s testament*, in its most *important* points, expose themselves to great prejudice for so doing; for they are excommunicated from all other share in it, than the punishment of the breakers of it; which is part of *their* anathema, who, of all others, are most guilty of *adding, or diminishing*, by undertaking to determine, for others as well as themselves, the *mind and intention* of the Holy Ghost in it.

But if it be true, as true it is, that few have writ of the divine authority of Scripture, who do not affirm that the very penmen of it were not only inspired by the Holy Ghost, but so extraordinarily acted by him, as that they were wholly asleep to their own will, desires or affections, like people taken out of themselves, and purely passive, as “clay in the hands of the potter,” to the *revelation, will, and motion* of the *spirit*; and for this end, that nothing delivered by them might have the least possibility of mistake, error, or imperfection, but be a “complete declaration of the

* Heb. i. 1.

will of God to men," I cannot see which way such men excuse themselves from great presumption, that will, notwithstanding, have the *wording of creeds of communion*, and reject that declaration of faith as insufficient, which is delivered in the very terms of the Holy Ghost ; and deny those persons to be members of Christ's church, that in conscience refuse to subscribe any other draught than that the Lord has given them.

Two things oppose themselves to this practice ; the glory of God, and the honour of the Scripture ; in that it naturally draws people from the regard due to God and the Scripture, and begets too much respect for men and their tradition. This was the difficulty Christ met with, and complained of, in his time ; they had set up so many rabbies to teach them religion, that the Lord of the true religion could hardly find place amongst them. And what did they do ? "They taught for doctrines the traditions of men ;" they gave their own and their predecessors' apprehensions, constructions, and paraphrases upon Scripture, for the mind and will of God, the rule of the people's faith. They were near at this pass in the church of Corinth, when they cried out, "I am for Paul, I am for Apollos, and I am for Cephas," though they had not the same temptation.

And that which followed then, ever will follow in the like case, and that is, distraction ; which is the contrary to the second thing that opposeth itself to

this practice, and that is the concord of Christians. For the sake of peace consider it; *Lo here, and lo there, always followed; one of this mind, and another of that; as many sects, as great men to make and head them.* This was the case of the Jews; and yet I do not hear that they devoured one another about their opinions and commentaries upon Scripture; but the Christians have done both; divided and persecuted too. First, they have divided, and that mostly upon the score of opinions about religion. They have not been contented with the expressions of the *Holy Ghost*; they liked their *own* better. And when *they* were set up, in the room of Scripture, and in the name of Scripture, submission was required, upon pain of worldly punishments. This dissatisfied curiosity, this unwarrantable,—what shall I say? This wanton search, has cost christendom dear, and poor England dearest of any part of it.

All this while, the head is set at work, not the heart; and that which Christ most insisted upon, is least concerned in this sort of faith and Christianity; and that is, “keeping his commandments.” For it is opinion, not obedience; notion, and not regeneration, that such men pursue. This kind of religion leaveth them as bad as it findeth them, and worse; for they have something more to be proud of. Here is a *creed*, indeed, but of what? The *conclusions of men*! and what to do? To prove they believe in Christ, who, it seems, never made them. It had been

happy for the world, that there had been no other *creeds*, than what he and his apostles gave and left; and it is not the least argument against their being needful to christian communion, *that Christ and his Apostles did not think so, who were not wanting to declare the whole counsel of God to the church.*

To conclude; if you desire peace, love truth, seek piety, and hate hypocrisy, lay by all those things called *articles of faith*, and *canons of the church*, that are not to be found in *express terms* in *Scripture*, or so plainly authorised *by Scripture*, as may, with ease, be discerned by every honest and conscientious person. And in the room of those numerous and disputed opinions, made the bond of external communion, let some *plain, general, and necessary truths be laid down in Scripture terms, and let them be few.*

THE
INNOCENCY OF ERROR
ASSERTED AND VINDICATED,
BY DR SYKES.



ARTHUR ASHLEY SYKES.

DR SYKES was a clergyman of the church of England, and held for many years a very high rank as a preacher, a scholar, and a writer. He was born in London about the year 1684, and was educated first at St Paul's school, and afterwards at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He took his degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1704, and applied himself to the study of divinity. His first ecclesiastical preferment was a vicarage in Kent, obtained through the favour of archbishop Tennison. This was in the year 1712. He remained in this station two years, when he was transferred to a rectory in Cambridgeshire, where he soon after published the tract entitled the *Innocency of Error asserted and vindicated*. He had already engaged in a controversy with Mr Brett to refute the notion, that such persons only as had been episcopally ordained could administer christian baptism. Of the treatise on the Innocency of Error, Dr Disney, in his life of the author, speaks as follows.

“Mr Sykes was then in the thirty first year of his age, and having diligently studied the Scriptures, ecclesiastical history, and all useful knowledge, which

applied to the forming just conceptions of the word and will of God, and of the invaluable and undeniable rights of men and Christians, there are no marks of a premature blossom unseasonably put forth, and likely to be blighted, ere it was set to bear fruit. But, on the contrary, we read a work which would have reflected honour on great abilities and learning, well corrected and digested by matured age.

“The subject of this publication was happily chosen, and the tract forms an excellent vindication of its author, and of the liberty he took in all his future writings; affording at the same time incontestible proof that he had fully satisfied himself of the duty of inquiry in its fullest extent, and in all its consequences, before he proceeded in the defence or attack of particular doctrines or opinions.*”

This tract met with a most favourable reception, and passed through several editions. It was attacked, however, from different quarters, and especially by Dr Potter, bishop of Oxford. The author defended his performance against every charge, and in reply to the bishop of Oxford he wrote an elaborate vindication.†

Dr Sykes received several preferments in the church, but preached for the most part at King’s

* *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Arthur Ashley Sykes, D. D.* By John Disney, D. D. London. 1785. p. 10.

† The original title of the tract was the *Innocency of Error asserted and vindicated*; but in the sixth edition, which was printed after the author’s death, the word *Involuntary* is inserted before *Error*, as more clearly indicating the nature of the work.

street chapel in Westminster. He wrote on religious and political topics, and in the account of his life above referred to, there are contained at full length the titles of no less than *sixty three* separate works, published by him at different times. He took the side of Hoadly in the Bangorian controversy, and was through his whole life a firm friend of christian liberty, the rights of conscience, and unshackled inquiry. His *Essay on Sacrifices*, and his *Scripture Doctrine of Redemption*, are among the best treatises, which have been written on these subjects. His inquiries are conducted on broad and liberal principles. The Scriptures he takes invariably for his guide, and follows boldly where they lead him, without regard to the fancies of men, or the mandates of fallible human tribunals. "His sentiments respecting the person of Jesus Christ," says his biographer, "are well known to have agreed with those of Dr Clarke; and one of his tracts was expressly written in defence of his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*." But all his discussions and controversies were carried on in an excellent temper, and in the spirit of the religion which he professed, and which he did so much to adorn in his life, and to defend and illustrate by his writings. He died on the twenty third of November, 1756, in the seventy third year of his age.



PREFACE

TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

THE *Innogeneity of Error* had not long been published, before *Remarks* upon it came out, wrote in a very *angry* manner ; some notice was taken of these in a *Preface* to the second edition. The same author, and in the same manner, wrote a defence of his *Remarks* ; and since that time others have likewise animadverted upon this little treatise, who laying hold of some incidental passages or inaccuracies, would seem to have confuted the book itself.

The great end I proposed in writing it was to show how innocent a thing it is to be mistaken in any matter, where industry, and honesty, and diligence, had been applied to find out truth ; and that God would never punish a man for his errors, if he had been sincere in his searches after the divine will. This point I have not seen confuted ; nay, I think that every one of the gentlemen who have been at the pains of endeavouring to refute this tract, have expressly, or by necessary consequence, owned it, how willing soever they may at the same time seem to be to deny it.

I had no other views in writing this treatise at first, nor have I now in correcting the inaccuracies of the former editions, but to follow truth in what I judge to be a matter of importance. From my first beginning to think, I have always deemed it not only an injury to persons, but an enmity to truth, to affix odious names and characters to such as honestly pursue truth, if they happen to mistake ; and I have never yet been able to perceive any harm or mischief to society, from a liberty of inquiring, or of publishing sentiments, which are of consequence to mankind.

When therefore it is suggested, as it has been, that I should in some other *times* have met with public disgrace and discountenance, and even censures on account of this treatise, I cannot forbear asking, whether it would have been on account of the *principles* in it, from which I have argued, or on account of the *consequences*, or on account of some *incidental inaccuracies* ? The first, every one that has wrote against me has granted ; the second, not any one can deny ; and as to the third, I shall always be ready to plead for my excuse ;

Homo sum, humani a me nil alienum puto.

I should ask too, what were those times ? Were they the times of darkness and ignorance ? Or were they the times of tyranny, and oppression, and cruelty ? Were they times when truth might dare to appear ; or when it could rear up its dejected face, and be heard in the midst of antichristian violence ?

But be those times what they will, I own that I rejoice, and every man of reason will rejoice with me, that the times we live in are times when private judgment is allowed ; when men may search after truth free from personal dangers ; when truth and not the authority of men is made the test of opinions ; and when the greatest men in power publicly disown all intention, and think it a disgrace to be charged with a design to put a stop to true liberty.

I have but one thing further to add ; that in this edition I have taken the liberty to correct, not only what I had observed to have misled some into notions which I never designed, but likewise many passages which have not, that I know of, been found fault with by others. I have added, altered, omitted, as I thought proper, very many places, and now submit it to the judgment of every reader that loves truth.

THE
INNOCENCY
OF
INVOLUNTARY ERROR
ASSERTED AND VINDICATED.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

SIR,

You expressed the other day a great deal of concern, not without some mixture of indignation, that I should assert and vindicate a position, which you thought monstrous and detestable, viz. *That no heresy is so destructive of religion as a wicked life ; no schism so damnable as a course of sin.* I then urged some arguments to you, which you owned contained in them a shew at least of reason, and an air of probability ; but yet you were apprehensive, that I might have used some art or disguise in my words, which then you could not see through so clearly ; and therefore you desired me to lay my reasons together, and give you an opportunity of weighing them distinctly

by yourself. I here send them to you ; expecting only and desiring a sincere love of truth, and a readiness to embrace her however negligently or inartificially dressed up ; assuring you from one who knew the worth of *Truth* and *Wisdom*, that *she is more precious than rubies, and all the things that thou canst desire are not to be compared to her.*

To evince the truth of the assertion, first in general, let the words be only considered, and the thing will be evident. Religion consists in an habitual disposition of the mind to perform our duties from a belief in God, and a desire to make ourselves acceptable to him. Now it is plain, that a course of sin is directly contrary to such a temper ; nay, it is a contradiction, to pretend to a disposition of mind to please God, and yet to act generally so as will displease him, that is, to lead a wicked life, or to live in a course of sin. Now if *heresy* or *schism* be not a contradiction to an habitual disposition of mind to please God, then I had good ground to assert and vindicate the position before laid down. By *heresy* is meant usually *an error in fundamentals*. Put the case now of any heresy, Arianism for instance, which some pretend is reviving, or Socinianism, or any other that you please. It is very possible for men to be persuaded of the truth of any one of those opinions, though it be deemed *heretical*, consistent with a hearty desire to perform their duties, and to please God. For where, I pray, is the inconsistency ? They *believe* in God,

and do their duties from a sense of him, and a desire to make themselves acceptable to him ; you yourself cannot deny but that they who do thus are more moral men than those who live in a *course of sin*. They think themselves obliged to act to the best of their knowledge, according to the rules which God has laid down ; which, if one may judge by the sinner's practice, he doth not. They with diligence and industry search and endeavour to find out the will of God, and steadily keep all those laws which they understand the purport of, which a wicked liver never strives to do.

This you think may be allowed. *But the Arian or Socinian pays not the honour, or the worship, which God has prescribed. And since no religion can be acceptable, which is contrary to the will of God, they that are guilty of such crimes shall suffer.*

You know my opinion so well on these points, that I need not tell you, I neither vindicate nor approve of the one or the other. But yet, supposing that the Arian, or Socinian, does not pay the worship which is by God commanded, yet each of them observes the will of God to the best of his knowledge ; whereas the sinner does not do this. The reputed heretic gives not so complete a worship as is supposed to be prescribed ; but then he fails through mere ignorance, in a point which is attended with such difficulties as are to him insuperable ; whereas the sinner fails in plain duties, and acts contrary to his knowledge. And so much at least as it is better to pay all that

one knows, or can learn to be due to a creditor, than to refuse what one knows to be due, so much is that which is called heresy better than sin.

The same answer will justify the other part of the assertion of *schism*.

Thus much may suffice in general as to the assertion; but because I would willingly go to the bottom of this question, and treat it with as much care as I can; I will endeavour to root up the foundation of your prejudices, by representing to you the *innocency of error*.

Error is the assent of the mind to a proposition as true, which is not so. If this extends no farther than the mind, it is what I call *simple error*. If a man proceeds upon this false bottom to regulate his practice, such error is then called a *practical error*. How far errors fall under the cognisance of man, or of a much higher tribunal, that of God, will appear from the ensuing discourse. In order to which I shall endeavour to show beyond dispute, that no errors, if involuntary, are or can be punishable.

FIRST. In all perceptions the mind is wholly *passive*; and the perceptions of things being in numberless instances quite different from what things are really in themselves, unless we are capable of bringing together and comparing a great many intermediate ideas to rectify these mistakes, we must *necessarily* fall into abundance of *errors*. Try to persuade a countryman that the sun is a great many times bigger

than the earth, or that it is a great many thousand miles distant from us, and he will think you attempt only to impose upon him, and endeavour to persuade him out of his senses. In these and ten thousand such like cases, men are as *necessarily* under errors, as they are *necessary* in their perceptions, and they cannot help continuing in this sort of mistakes, for want of proper means to rectify them; and therefore in these cases they are no more to blame for not removing them, than a stone is to blame for moving when it is impelled.

SECONDLY. Error always consisting in a mistake of the judgment, it must be in its own nature involuntary; and if involuntary error be punishable, then wherever there is error there is guilt, and consequently *all men* must be guilty before God on that account. For where is the man that doth not entertain some errors, either concerning things which really do exist, or in deductions which he draws from them? Who is there that is so well versed in nature, as to be master of all her mazes, and certain that he knows, I say, *knows* all her secrets? Or who is there that ever repented or asked God's pardon for mistakes of this nature? And yet if errors be criminal, it is certain that all crimes unrepented of are damnable.

But it is allowed that a man may be mistaken in many things of this nature, without any crime or fault, But where God has concerned himself in the discovery of anything, there it is thought to be criminal to err, or to be ignorant.

This, though it may seem to carry a profound respect for the revelation of God, yet it is plainly insufficient for the purpose for which it is brought. For, *First*, is any man obliged to know, or understand in the meaning which God intended, *every* thing that is revealed? Is any man obliged to have a distinct knowledge of every passage of the Scriptures, which unless he can attain to, he must necessarily be damned? Let him that thinks so set about the explication of the Apocalypse, or the old prophets, and try if he is capable himself of doing what he thinks is required of others under pain of damnation. *Secondly*, it is impossible not to believe what God has thought fit to reveal, supposing one knows that God has revealed it. But surely a man that has sufficient ground to believe that God has declared his mind, yet may not have a clear and distinct understanding of everything contained in the Revelation. Suppose a man should not understand who, or what is meant by the *White Horse* in the Revelations, or what is the meaning of *being baptised for the dead*, or of many other such like difficult passages; yet whilst he owns that God is the author of these passages, and is ready to believe them in the best manner he can get an understanding of them, where can be his crime? Why is it not rational to conclude, that if God had designed upon pain of damnation that every one should have determinate and adequate ideas belonging to those sounds, he would have so expressed himself as that no one

should mistake his meaning? Therefore, *Thirdly*, if it is always criminal to err in the meaning of a passage of Scripture, the crime will not rest where we are apt to fix it, but will ascend to a place where we dare not think of guilt, even to God himself, who has delivered his will in terms that are so hard to be understood. *Fourthly*, the distinction here made use of between *errors in things revealed*, and *errors in other matters*, proves directly, that *error as error* is not *criminal*. For it is as much an error to believe heat in the fire, as to mistake any *theological truth*. But I proceed.

THIRDLY. If *involuntary error* be punishable by God; then it is the greatest cruelty, injustice, and tyranny imaginable in him, to make such creatures as cannot but err in many cases, and yet to punish them for erring. Our knowledge is but of very narrow extent, and confined to a very few things; the rest must be resolved into opinion; and as there are innumerable degrees of assent, from assurance and confidence, down to distrust and disbelief, there may be as many possibilities of errors. As this then is the make and frame of our constitutions, it would be cruel and unjust in God to punish us for what we cannot help; or to treat us as breakers of his laws, when we only want *light*, which the *Father of Light* alone can give.

FOURTHLY. If *involuntary errors* are punishable by God, it is not a few that are called or represented as *heretics*; nor a few *dissenters* in a nation, (though

it is only these *more openly* are struck at by the abettors of such unchristian tenets,) no, nor ten thousand times ten thousand, that must perish everlastingly; but the flames of hell will reach to almost, if not quite to all the christian world. Let us look into the several communities of Christians, and by an impartial view of their *professed* tenets, see how by the lump whole nations must be damned, if mere *errors* are damnable! The Greek church denies the *procession of the Holy Ghost* from the *Son*; the Melchites do the same; so do the Georgians and Muscovites; the Nestorians maintain the heresy of Nestorius, averring *two persons* as well as two natures in our Saviour; the Christians of St Thomas do the same; the Jacobites are Eutychians; the Egyptians think it their duty to *circumcise*, and to give the sacrament of the Lord's supper to infants; the Abassines circumcise; the Armenians believe as the Greeks about the *procession of the Holy Ghost*, and receive infants to the communion; the Maronites do the same, and are Monothelites, or lately were so, till they reconciled themselves to the Romish church, which I doubt has but little lessened their errors; the Roman Catholics are almost as full of errors as they have practices; their idolatry and superstitions are as evident as their profession of transubstantiation. If we look upon protestantism, we cannot but own all the *dissenters* from the *church of England* to be erroneous. Those of Geneva, France, and Holland think episcopacy

unnecessary, and have varied from that form of government which Christ and his Apostles instituted; Scotland is in the same unhappy condition; the Lutherans *consubstantiate*; in a word, all are in error, but *our happy church*; thrice happy, if we can but keep in the same state we are in! Heaven will be replenished with us alone; and the compliment formerly paid by the Pope to our nation, that *Angli* are *quasi Angeli*, will be proper only when applied to the members of our communion!

I need not speak a word about the heathens, or the Mahometans, which make up, if we believe Mr Breerwood's computation, twenty five parts of thirty of the world. Of the remaining five, all but our little *dust upon the balance*, our *drop in the sea*, are to go into everlasting punishment, *into a place where the fire is not quenched, and the worm never dies!* In short, heaven is made only for a part of England, and a much less part too than is perhaps imagined. For the men who would be in charity with all other Christians, who think they all have a right to judge for themselves, and that no man hath a dominion over the conscience of another; that all men have a right to toleration as much as they have to property, these (unhappy men, worthy of better fate!) these bad churchmen must go ———— their enemies will tell them whither.

You will be ready to evade the force of this argument, by retorting it in some such manner as this;

that by parity of reason it may be said, that sin therefore is not damnable, because all mankind are sinners. For where is the difference in these arguments? If damnation be the consequence of sin; it will follow, that all mankind being sinners, all mankind must be damned; and, damnation being put as the consequence of error, all mankind being under errors, all mankind must be damned. Where is the difference, you will perhaps ask, of these arguments, that the one is a good, the other is a bad one? But,

To this the answer is so easy, that I shall not insist on it farther than to observe, that all sin is voluntary, and unrepented of is damnable; but the error here spoken of is involuntary, and cannot be repented of, because taken to be truth. Therefore we see all the world dies in errors of some sort or other, never asking pardon of, or for them. But sin is always repented of by every sober, good Christian, whether he be a Grecian, Roman Catholic, or Protestant; which shews that all the world agrees in a great and material difference in the cases. But this makes

A FIFTH argument, why involuntary error cannot be punishable; because we cannot repent of such error, since we believe it to be true. I do not say a man cannot retract an error, when he discovers it to be such, which is some sort of repentance, if you think fit to call it so; but a man can have no sting of conscience, no remorse, no selfcondemning notions, for being under a mistake. Error being a mistake of the

judgment, it must direct and guide our actions as much as truth itself. Now the sway of truth is, by directing our actions according to our judgment ; and if that be misinformed, or be misguided, the effect must be the same as of truth, as flowing from the same principle. Now as it is a contradiction to be fully persuaded of any point, and to repent of it at the same time, it will follow, that because the error is unknown, it therefore cannot be repented of. And who is there in ten thousand, or in a great many times that number, that doth not die in abundance of errors about one thing or other, which yet he takes to be so many real truths ? Who is there that strives to make his peace with God, for such things, which he has endeavoured to free himself from, but yet continues in them, not through any fault of his own ? Sin being voluntary, and our own act, we repent of it, and ask God's pardon for it. But error in judgment, when we do our endeavours sincerely to attain truth, is not an action ; in that we are passive, and consequently it is not our own deed, nor imputable to us, more than other things, which we can neither prevent their happening, nor remedy after they have happened.

Every man may therefore say, what the incomparable Mr Chillingworth says, " If men suffer themselves neither to be betrayed into their errors, nor kept in them by any sin of their will ; if they do their best endeavours to free themselves from all errors, and yet fail of it through human frailty ; so well am I per-

suaded of the goodness of God, that if in me alone should meet a confluence of all such errors of all the protestants of the world, that were thus qualified, I should not be so much afraid of them all, as I should be to ask pardon for them. For, to ask pardon for simple and purely involuntary errors, is tacitly to imply that God is angry with us for them ; and that were to impute to him the tyranny of requiring *brick* where he gives no *straw*, of expecting to *gather where he strewed not, to reap where he sowed not* ; of being offended with us, for doing what he knows we cannot do."

For these reasons it is that I conclude, that involuntary error cannot be punishable ; and such must be reckoned not only errors that have been critically examined by every particular person, but such as have been searched by the rule of common human prudence and discretion. Those must not always be reckoned voluntary, which arise from the common springs of error, though these are too often reckoned such, viz. authority, preconceived hypotheses ; or even predominant passions themselves ; much less are those to be reckoned guilty of voluntary errors, who want either abilities or opportunities to search after truth. Such only are voluntary as can be avoided by that care and application of mind, which the importance of the subject requires ; or such as we embrace or continue in through negligence, sloth, and such like causes.

You will not, I know, admit it for truth, without good proof, that errors, springing from the causes just now mentioned, are not criminal. I shall therefore consider them distinctly, and see if there be any sin or evil in errors so occasioned ; and if there be, in what that sin consists.

First, then, that error is not always criminal, or punishable, which springs from authority. The bulk of mankind, it is certain, have not abilities or time sufficient to inquire after abstruse truths, and therefore must either have no notions at all, or must take up with the notions of others. Some are guided by, and see entirely with the eyes of such whom they judge to be their friends. Others there are who think nothing true but what is to be found among the ancients, and think it an infallible note, that Aristotle in philosophic matters, some or other of the Fathers in religious ones, have said it. Some resign their minds to the church blindly, and without examination ; others take up with the current opinions, and imagine error could never spread itself so wide, and captivate such and such great persons. In short, these are all, to their respective guides, just what Sancho was to Don Quixote ; they are fully persuaded of enchantments, giants, and adventures, which their masters dream of ; they bring themselves into frequent difficulties to justify them ; and then expect no less than islands or earldoms as the rewards of their follies.

To shew you that the errors of such are not always criminal, let it be considered, that authority is allowed

to be not only a means of information, but is a ground of persuasion too in several cases. For instance ; in assenting to a divine revelation, the authority of God is a sufficient ground of our belief, because no truth is more certain, no maxim is more evident than this, that the God of truth cannot, will not, lie. His authority is grounded on his veracity, and integrity, and ability ; and in depending upon him we cannot err. But then in other cases, where only men are concerned, their authority is proportionable to their veracity, integrity, and powers. If any one therefore depends upon these, he may frequently be deceived. And if he be, it is plain that the error is not for want of will to know the truth, but want of power to attain it. The canal through which it was to pass is stopped, and therefore it is impossible to get at it. There are numberless persons who cannot read, and these must necessarily depend on others for information in their religion. If these are under errors, and their errors are criminal, the crime can fall on those only from whom they receive instruction. Prudence and discretion will sometimes oblige us to depend on the authority of others, where possibly they, and consequently we, may be mistaken. To punish us for such errors, would be the same as to require us to act imprudently and indiscreetly ; which a God of infinite wisdom cannot expect from us ; nor will he be so rigid a taskmaster as to require brick without straw from us. Besides, were all errors criminal, which spring from authority,

it is certain that a means of information, and a ground of persuasion, would be rendered not only dangerous, but inconsistent with prudence and discretion. For it would be imprudent to hazard damnation upon crediting any body ; and yet it is impossible to withhold assent, when there seems to us to be greater degrees of probability for what is said, than against it. If only some errors which spring from this fountain are criminal, then it is plain that the faultiness of them must be caused by something else besides authority, viz. from negligence or carelessness, or some such circumstance of error.

Secondly ; nor is that error always criminal, which proceeds from preconceived hypotheses, or positions, which being false, are admitted for true. Such preconceptions being erroneous, it is in vain to expect anything from them but errors ; and if the hypotheses are not criminal, that which flows from them directly cannot be so. He that searches after truth ought as critically as he can to examine the principles he goes upon, and must take great care that every step is fairly deduced, or else he will quickly find that it is not the light of truth, but an *ignis fatuus*, which he pursues. But yet how few, if any, are guarded against preconceptions. It is often nothing but inadvertency, when any one takes up with prepossessions ; but then, as sure as inadvertency is very consistent with sincerity, so sure it is that a God of goodness and justice cannot punish them when joined together. Some-

times the prepossession is so strong that no arguments will make any impression upon the mind ; and it is very possible for a man to imagine, that he sees a connexion between two propositions, when there really is none ; as on the contrary, not to perceive it where there is. Ideas, which have been long combined together, and which we have constantly associated in our minds, are found to be sometimes inseparable by all our care. When this is the case, we ought not to deem it obstinacy, or froward waywardness, if we are not able to convince a man of some mistake he labours under ; but we should leave it to time, and further care to cure him of his errors. The instances are very numerous of learned men, who never could be convinced of certain mistakes.

The idea of God proves his existence, is a position so far from true, that nothing seems to me a plainer paralogism ; and yet how many are there who contend for its evidence, as being one of the shortest and most direct conclusions imaginable ? Should an atheist be convinced of the being of a God, from that argument, would any one affirm that he would be liable to punishment for his error ? Suppose any one seduced by the ambiguity of the word God, in the sacred writings, should maintain an absolute coequality of the persons of the ever blessed Trinity ; this would be, if I mistake not, direct Tritheism ; or suppose any one should assert the words *one God*, speaking of the three persons of the Trinity, to signify one individual

essence or substance under different personal characters ; this would be the error of Sabellius. Suppose, I say, one early educated in, and strongly prepossessed in favour of either of these notions, should maintain them, or believe them to be true, where would be the dishonesty, or insincerity of this ? He may notwithstanding have a cordial love for God, and his Christ ; he may be strictly religious, and live temperately, soberly, and godly ; and if these are the things which alone are required by God in order to a Christian's salvation, why should we imagine that he will damn us for our notions, when it is so often out of our power whether we will believe them or not ? In short, an hypothesis may be received as true, which may be false ; or as false, which may be true ; without any wilfulness, insincerity, or resolution to maintain it, right or wrong. One may not see the error for want of abilities, or be so bewildered in the intricate ways that lead to truth, as after a tiresome search to sit down with error, and embrace a shadow instead of a substance. These, and such like involuntary cases, we should not confound with voluntary practices ; or imagine that if the one be criminal, the other must imply a share of guilt.

The crime in the present case, be it more or less, is wholly in negligence, or want of that application which ought to have been employed, and not in the error itself, which was consequent upon education, or early prejudice.

Thirdly; in cases where there is want of abilities to know an error, or want of opportunity, I need not prove that truth is out of our power to come at it, and consequently that we are necessarily under error, and therefore not liable to punishment. I will add,

Fourthly; that even predominant passions hindering us in the search after truth, do not always render errors punishable. Truth it is certain is often no more in our power than perception is; nor can we help assenting to what we think has the best, and clearest, and most proofs. We cannot assent to any truth, but such as we judge to be so, according to the evidences we have. If any passion therefore predominates, and hurries us away before we can reflect, we cannot but err; and then it is our misfortune, it is our frailty, it is our infirmity, and we are unhappy in it; but it is not our fault or crime; we become the objects of goodness, not of anger, or severity. Here would I recommend to every man a careful examination of his actions; and if he finds them tending to the hurt of others, to suspect some latent negligence, or carelessness in himself; for passions which we can control will not excuse us in injurious actions. Reason and religion were given us in order to regulate our wills, and to make us happy here, by promoting love and charity, and universal benevolence. But if we suffer, through our own faults, our passions to take fire, and break in upon these duties, we become responsible to the great judge of all our actions.

You will say, perhaps, that it is needless to guard against evil actions, since they flowing necessarily from the judgment, must be as innocent as the judgment is.

I readily allow, that all such actions as necessarily follow from an involuntary error, must be as innocent as the error is. But in general this is not the case of human actions. The duties of justice and charity to our neighbours, of temperance to ourselves, and of piety to God, are so express and plain, that it is hard not to be convinced of the common obligation, which all are under to them. They are so evident, that if at any time any man is so disposed as to think evil good, and good evil, he cannot but suspect a fault in himself and his own mind, just as when we are unable to perceive light at noonday, we may justly conclude that the organs of sight are indisposed. Our actions therefore should always be considered, and always be guarded carefully; and if they tend any how to barbarity, or injustice, or what usually appears as evil, it will be a good ground for suspicion, and for a more careful examination of such principles as direct them. But to proceed.

You will be apt to ask here, if any sort of error can be criminal? Will a man be justified before God, who is guilty of heresy, because, forsooth, he is passionate, or because he follows a great many who have gone before him in the same track, or because he takes up with whimsical notions, which are acknowledged false-

hoods? Is not this to make a chaos and confusion amongst mankind? Is there no difference between erroneous persons and others? Is there none between orthodoxy and heresy? Is it all one, if a man be an Arian, Socinian, a Macedonian, or let him have what notions he pleases, provided they are involuntary?

I shall turn the edge of this popular clamour, for I cannot allow it the name of an argument, in a few words. As,

First; all voluntary errors (and I have told you what are voluntary) are criminal, because they are contempts of God, who has given us proper means to search after truth. It is the improvement of our souls we are as much as we can to mind; and wilfully to refuse and neglect that, is to act contrary to the purpose of God, in vesting us with such faculties. But what a difference is there between this conduct and our falling into errors through infirmity, or by necessity? Let voluntary errors therefore be as criminal as you please, but then you must remember to lay them to the charge of only such as are guilty of them, and you must be very sure who are such; for be assured that it is not your bare charge will make them so.

Secondly; an heretic will not be justified because he is passionate, or because he follows a multitude, or has great authorities for his errors, but because his errors are involuntary. He doth his best to rid himself of that slavery, which ties down his mind to error, but finds himself unable to gain the mastery. He can

say as St Paul does, Rom. vii. 18. *To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I know not.* Wherever it can be shown that heresy or schism is a known voluntary act, there to be sure it is criminal, and no doubt that God justly may and will take cognisance of it. But when it is involuntary, and arises from a man's mistaking the truth, schism or heresy is so far from being damnable, that I cannot but think it is highly commendable, because it evidences honesty, sincerity, love of God, and of truth, and regards not the praise of men. Such men will certainly meet with favour at the last day from a God of goodness, how great soever their errors may be, because they embraced them, and pursued them, as believing them to be his will, and used their best care to find out the truth. It is not the mere following multitudes, that excuses men; but it is the doing their best to know the will of God, which takes off the imputation of sin and guilt. Therefore,

Thirdly; a man may be branded with the ignominious characters of an Arian, Sabellian, or what you please; but if he be honest and sincere, and hath done his best to rid himself of those notions, and yet he cannot but think them true, that is, agreeable to revelation and reason, I can see no reason but that one heaven may receive him, as well as it may the most orthodox. But this will still appear more clear, if we consider that,

All persons under the misfortune of error are either,

First ; such as err involuntarily in purely speculative matters. Or,

Secondly ; such whose involuntary errors have no necessary connexion with practice, but yet they may accidentally have an influence upon it. Or,

Thirdly ; such whose involuntary errors have a necessary connexion with practice, but they do not see it. Or,

Lastly ; such as err voluntarily, and practice according to their errors.

First, such as err in purely speculative matters, (I speak of persons who have endeavoured to know the truth, but cannot attain unto it,) such, I say, are as free from crime or fault, as it is possible for such as are orthodox in those points to be. For he that with sincerity searches after truth, is under a necessity of assenting to such propositions as seem to him to have the greatest degree of probability on their sides. It is out of our powers not to think that truest, for which the arguments appear to us to be strongest ; and it is our duty to let evidence, or the greatest degree of probability prevail, and to give a ready ear to that. In the various speculations concerning the unity of the Trinity, it is granted by all that they are in the dark, as to many particulars ; and that in those cases, where God has not revealed his mind, it is ridiculous and absurd for man to presume positively to determine. It is plain too, that very honest, and very sincere, and very pious men, have erred, or are suspected to have erred,

in their notions upon this point ; from whence it is plain that revelation has not very clearly and distinctly laid down the things which have been so much canvassed.

Now if it be a good principle, (and what protestant is there that ever called it in question?) that the Scriptures are clear in all fundamental points, then it follows, that if this be not clearly laid down, it cannot be a fundamental point how the Three are One. The errors which arise about that, either arise from want of sufficient revelation, which men endeavour to supply by, or to reconcile to reason, that other light which God has kindled in every man's breast in order to enlighten his ways, or else from some violent prejudice or other, which good men are not able to surmount. Now he that studies sincerely this or any other point, with design to honour his great Creator, by searching and examining what he has revealed, by endeavouring to find out what he has discovered ; in a word, he that doth his best to know his master's will, and to find out his meaning, and yet errs ; to dare to say that such a man sins, and shall be punished for it hereafter, is little less than blasphemy. For it is a consequential denial of God's goodness and justice, to affirm him resolved to punish us for involuntary errors, or for not knowing what we cannot with all our pains and industry attain the knowledge of. "To say, that when a place of Scripture," says the incomparable Mr Chillingworth, c. 2. s. 104, "by reason of ambiguous

terms, lies indifferent between divers senses, whereof one is true, and the other is false ; that God obliges men under the pain of damnation not to mistake through error and human frailty, is to make God a tyrant ; and to say, that he requires us certainly to attain that end, for the attaining whereof we have no certain means ; which is to say, that, like Pharaoh, he *gives no straw and requires brick*, that he *reaps where he sows not*, that he *gathers where he strews not* ; that he will not be pleased with our utmost endeavours to please him, without full, and exact, and never failing performance ; that his will is, we should do what he knows we cannot do ; that he will not accept of us according to that which we have, but requireth of us what we have not ; which, whether it consisteth with his goodness, with his wisdom, or with his word, I leave it to honest men to judge.”

I cannot forbear transcribing from him the following instance, which is so exactly parallel to the matter in hand. “ If I should send a servant to Paris, or Rome, or Jerusalem, and he, using his utmost diligence not to mistake his way, yet, notwithstanding, meeting often with such places where the road is divided into several ways, whereof one is as likely to be true, and as likely to be false as any other, should at length mistake, and go out of the way ; would not any man say, that I were an impotent, foolish, and unjust master, if I should be offended with him for doing so ? And shall we not tremble to impute that to God, which we

should take in foul scorn, if it were imputed to ourselves? Certainly, I, for my part, fear I should not love God, if I should think so strangely of him."

For any one therefore to imagine it zeal for God to persecute men for errors in speculation, which we are not able to correct, what is it but to betray an ignorance of God and of his attributes? It is calling God a tyrant, to say that he will punish them; and it is making men the devil's agents, for them to punish them; it is pride, malice, and uncharitableness; it is promoting the power and designs of Satan, and encouraging that scandalous and diabolical vice hypocrisy; it is suppressing truth itself; it is putting a stop to industry; in a word, it is neither *entering one's self*, nor *letting others*, (as much as we can help it,) *enter into the kingdom of heaven*.

When therefore I see a man of pride and haughtiness, of insolence, art, and cunning, one that never speaks his own real sentiments, but only what may make an auditory think him entirely in theirs; one that recommends concord and unanimity, and in order thereto endeavours to persuade others to leave off all hard words, yet instantly rises up and uses them himself; one that is fearful lest another should bear away the prize of elocution, or outstrip him in honours, interest, or favour; one that is aiming to be head of a party, and throwing out ill names, insinuations, and reproaches liberally upon an adversary, for the very things he has been guilty of himself; one that acts al-

ways a double part, and is so scrupulously zealous for the glory of God, and the respect to be paid to the sacred pages, as to imagine a scripture story profaned if put upon a sign ; in short, when I see a man ambitious, and resolved to sacrifice all to please the party in which he is engaged, sure I am, that one of this, or the like temper will shew a mighty zeal against any error, how innocent soever in itself ; will be ready to condemn any one that opposes him as a *heretic*, and will be for all the arbitrary proceedings and tyrannical prosecutions, that he can promote. Such an haranguer will be obstinate in his opinion, positive and confident in what he asserts, and nothing, no not the whole *bench of bishops* should they be ready to deliver an opinion contrary to his, would be able to alter the least tittle of his haughty spirit. Were not this spirit of *popery* too rife among *protestants*, I had not digressed, but had soon proceeded to the

Second sort of persons under error, viz. such whose errors have no necessary connexion with their practice, but yet may, through accident, have an influence upon it. As the former sort of erroneous persons were innocent and free from guilt, because their error was involuntary, so are these, when the reason is the same. The guilt of error is always to be measured by the disposition of him that is under it. If therefore it be not the result of negligence or carelessness, but was taken up after mature deliberation, I see not how it can expose any one to punishment from God. Thus, for

instance, should a man mistake the meaning of the word '*Ὁμοούσιος*, of *one substance*, when it is applied to the Son, and think it means *one individual substance* with the Father, and notwithstanding all he can do in examining and comparing texts of Scripture, should yet continue fixed in that, as the only means of understanding how the *Father* and *Son* are *One*; he would, where he to explain himself, be found guilty of the error of either Tritheism or Socinianism; but yet he would be free from guilt before God under these circumstances. Or, suppose that one should think the creed, commonly called of Athanasius, to be so agreeable to the tenor of Scripture, that it would be inconsistent with the true interest of the christian religion to have it expunged the book of Common Prayer. These, and abundant more such errors have certainly no necessary connexion with practice. But notwithstanding that, a man may be influenced by them in such a manner as to render himself justly punishable by man. Suppose, for example, that one in these circumstances were to become turbulent to his neighbours, and injurious to them, no doubt the civil magistrate would have a right to punish him, notwithstanding the erroneous person might think it a *throwing up the essentials of faith, and the uniformity of worship*, or a putting both them that differ from him, *and himself too into a gulf of perdition*, to suffer others to proceed in their ways. The civil magistrate is not to direct himself by the conscience of others, but is to take care of

the peace of society, the disturbance of which is, and ought to be, criminal before him. But then when these very actions come under the cognisance of God, at the great day of judgment, they will be considered in another manner ; how far they were the effects of carelessness, of negligence, or sloth ; and if the error itself was at first embraced as a real truth, and the obstacles which hindered the man from perceiving the truth were such as he could not surmount, after his best endeavours to know the truth, neither the error, nor its consequences, under these circumstances, will be punished by our equitable and righteous judge.

And here I think we may lay down this as a rule, by which we may judge of the importance of any error. *All such things may a man err in safely, of which he may safely be ignorant ;* for if his salvation is not at stake by reason of his knowledge, supposing he masters the truth he aims at, it is superfluous knowledge in respect of salvation ; and therefore if he mistakes it, he mistakes about something, which has no relation to his salvation.

But you will be apt perhaps to say, that evil thoughts are reckoned by our Saviour amongst *the things which defile a man*, Mat. xv. 19, 20. that they will certainly be punished, being certainly sinful ; and that errors are evil thoughts, which injure the soul, which exclude the light of truth, and consequently defile and pollute the soul, and therefore must render a man obnoxious to punishment.

I need not stay to tell you, that evil thoughts do not signify erroneous ones, but such as, if indulged and prosecuted, will produce evil actions. Certain it is, that first motions are not in our powers; and God could not be said to act with justice, much less with equity or mercy, should he punish what is not in our power to prevent. But if these first motions, which I suppose to be of evil thoughts, be indulged, if we take a pleasure in them, it is evident then that we declare our approbation of them, and consequently we make them our own, and by that means the man is defiled, and will be punished for it.

Again, a man may be mistaken in numberless instances, which if he prosecutes, yet his errors will not produce any evil actions; but then a man cannot entertain an evil thought, but if he prosecutes that, it will produce wicked acts; which plainly shows a great difference between evil and erroneous thoughts.

To strengthen this, let me add an observation or two, viz. 1st. That nowhere in all the Scriptures do the Apostles, or our blessed Saviour, ever assert, that men should be punished for involuntary errors. 2dly. Everywhere, when occasion is taken to treat of the proceedings at the day of judgment, we find that our actions, and they only, are the subjects of inquiry. In that we have *DONE good or evil, the WORKERS of iniquity are to be rewarded or punished*. Vide Mat. vii. 21, 23; xiii. 41; xvi. 27; xxv. 31, 46; Luke xiii. 26; John v. 29; Rom. ii. 6, 7, 10, &c.

From these and other passages of the same import, I conclude that either the Judge of mankind has not truly told us the subjects of his inquiry at the last day, which would be blasphemy to say ; or else involuntary errors will not be punished. I proceed to the

Third sort of erroneous persons, viz. such whose errors have a necessary connexion with practice, but yet the connexion is not by them seen. However plain and evident the consequences of them are to others, yet whilst they are denied and avoided as so much poison by them, who embrace the error, such mistake cannot be but very innocent. There is not a plainer connexion between any principle and its consequences, than there is between a fixed belief of a fatality, and the reasonableness of running up to a loaded cannon's mouth ; or between a firm persuasion of God's having elected or reprobated men before they have done either good or evil, and the gratification of their inclinations ; and yet numbers that steadily believe the one, will detest and abhor the other. It seems very clear, that if a man be absolutely predestinated to happiness, and cannot fall from grace, nothing should hinder him from indulging his appetites, or from enjoying all the pleasures of this life, since he cannot on any account fail of the next. Or in another instance, they that maintain good works not to be necessary to salvation, but resolve all into faith, why should not they prosecute their pleasures, and give the loose to their appetites? Yet, notwithstanding

the seemingly evident connexion, there are those who would lay down their lives rather than admit the conclusion. The reason of this conduct seems to be this; they admit an error as an indisputable truth; or, which amounts to the same in this case, they are deceived by an ambiguous expression of Scripture. The principle itself they take up with is true, when rightly understood; and finding it in Scripture, they are positive that no demonstration is stronger than this is,—God hath said it, therefore it is true. But running away with the words, they leave the meaning behind them, and admit verbal principles, if I may call them so, instead of ideal ones. They therefore will deny a consequence, which they find to be inconsistent with all the other notions of religion, which they entertain. They have the good fortune to be kept in their respective duties by other reasons, which are clear, and plain, and positive; and seeing the consequences deduced from their erroneous principles stare them so boldly in their faces, they abominate them; not because they really do not follow, but because they are evidently disagreeable to other notions, which they have equally imbibed.

Had all men judgment to discern error from truth, no one would continue under error. The firmness with which this sort of men embrace the notions, which they think are contained in the word of God, plainly shows them lovers of God, and of his Christ; it shows them honest, and very unwilling that man should extort

from them any sacred truth. They are ready to sacrifice their lives to man, in proof, that with sincerity they believe what God, they think, has revealed. They do their best to know his will, and to act according to it ; and therefore errors in such persons signify no more than no errors. Supposing they had had the good fortune to believe right, they would have been but the same good men ; their practices had been the same ; and since it is our works that will be rewarded or punished, they will certainly have their rewards, who continue good, notwithstanding principles, which have a necessary connexion with evil. Sure it is, that the errors of such people spring, not from choice or will, but from the force of what they think Scripture and reason. And if, as Mr Chillingworth incomparably argues, “ By reason of the seeming conflict which is oftentimes between Scripture, reason, and authority on the one side, and Scripture, reason, and authority on the other ; if by reason of the variety of tempers, abilities, educations, and unavoidable prejudices, whereby men’s understandings are variously formed and fashioned, they do embrace several opinions, whereof some must be erroneous ; to say that God will damn them for such errors, who are lovers of him, and lovers of truth, is to rob man of his comfort, and God of his goodness ; it is to make man desperate, and God a tyrant.”

The *fourth* and last, and only bad sort of erroneous persons, are such as err voluntarily, that is, through

carelessness, or sloth, and negligence ; and are unwilling to receive the truth when laid before them, and practice according to their errors. These it is certain will meet with their deserts, and are the objects of God's just punishments ; and the reason of it is, in such there is a want of honesty, or which is worse, the actual practice of dishonesty, insincerity, and their consequence. Here is affected ignorance, no desire of information or amendment ; here is a breach of clear, positive laws, and the concurrence of will and choice to render it perfect malice.

The zeal and warmth of some will be for loading this fourth article, and for bringing under these characters all whom they think fit to damn for schism or heresy, or even such whom they suspect of these crimes. Enough has been said already, I think, to satisfy an intelligent, impartial person. But yet I beg leave to subjoin, what will add a considerable force to what has been already offered to you, viz. the consideration of the obligations all men are under to follow their consciences, even though they are erroneous.

Agreed on all hands it is, that a conscience directed by the will and word of God obliges a man to act according to its dictates. Now conscience being the judgment which every man passes upon his actions, as to the goodness or illness of them, the question is only, how far a man is obliged to act in cases where he is mistaken in his judgment ? Now to this the answer

is easy ; that a man is obliged always to follow his judgment, though it is erroneous. For,

First ; conscience, or our judgment concerning things is a power or faculty of the mind, which God has implanted in us, on purpose to be the rule of our actions. When therefore we act in contradiction to that, our actions are voluntary, and contrary to the knowledge we have of God ; consequently we are guilty of voluntary disobedience, that is, of sin against God.

Secondly ; the evil of any action is always measured and judged of by God, and all good men, by the intention of the agent. What a man doth necessarily, is none of his act ; but so far as he concurs, consents, and wills any action, so far is he the agent. In an action therefore committed against conscience, the will being supposed entirely to concur, the agent must necessarily be dishonest, insincere, and consequently guilty of a vice.

Or thus ; that is the perpetual rule of all actions, which if we follow, we are honest ; if we do not, we are dishonest. Now such is conscience ; we are honest if we follow and practice virtue, known to us to be virtue ; as likewise, if we hate and avoid vice, known to us to be such. Now our conscience being our only guide or rule, and it being wickedness and hypocrisy to swerve from it, to act against conscience, must be wickedness. Should a Jew pretend to turn Christian, and offer himself at the font for baptism, and

yet not believe Christ to be come, nor anything of Christianity, every one would justly detest his hypocrisy and vileness, which is justly imputable to him, for acting contrary to his conscience.

Thirdly; the sacred pages justify the same doctrine, telling us, Rom. xiv. 23. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* St Paul is plainly asserting that to be sin, which does not proceed from a *firm and full persuasion of mind*, that it is lawful and agreeable to the will of God. Now, whatsoever is contrary to conscience, is contrary to such a persuasion. Nay, St Paul carries this much farther in the former part of the verse; *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith.* And if he that doubteth is liable to punishment, because he doth a thing which he knows not whether it be lawful or not, much more doth he sin, who acts contrary to faith and full persuasion of mind.

Objection. You will say, perhaps, notwithstanding all this, and more which may be urged, that a man's conscience cannot be the rule of his actions, because a rule must always be right and straight; but conscience very often swerves from straightness by means of errors; therefore some other rule, even the rule of conscience itself, viz. the word of God, should be our guide.

Answer. The word of God is the rule of conscience, so far only as it is known and understood; and all men, no question, who know it to be the word

of God, are ready to submit their judgments to it. But then he who lies under an erroneous conscience doth not know the will of God ; for if he knows it, how is he erroneous ? If he doth not know it, it is impossible for that to be his guide or rule.

You will say, a man ought, in such circumstances, to suspend his actions. That is, a man ought to suspend his actions when his conscience tells him that it is his duty to do them ; which is but little different from a contradiction.

But what must a man do in such unhappy circumstances, when the laws of God are contrary to one's conscience ?

The answer is obvious ; he must follow his conscience, let the consequence be what it will. Should he break the laws of God, not known or understood, by following his erroneous conscience, he would as certainly be free from guilt before God, as, were he literally to keep the laws of God, but yet act against his conscience, he would be guilty of a flagrant crime. This perhaps may seem a paradox ; but yet if there be a rule in any case of distinguishing between what is a sin and what is not one, it is easy to do so by the rule in the present case. As,

First ; that is a crime, which is committed with a base, vile, and dishonest mind and intention ; but he that acts with an erring conscience against the unknown, or not understood will of God, acts with a sincere and honest mind ; therefore to follow one's con-

science in such cases, even against the will of God, is not a crime. *Secondly*; the moral evil of any action is not to be judged of from the bare fact itself, but from the circumstances attending it. Every killing of a man is not murder; nor is every falsehood a lie; nor is every sort of taking away another man's goods theft and robbery. If killing a man, considered only as to the fact, were *malum in se*, then it would have been absolutely impossible that, in any circumstances, one might have taken away the life of another; or that God should ever have commanded Abraham to slay his son Isaac; because God would have commanded the performance of an act absolutely inconsistent with goodness; which would be a contradiction. We find that God himself excused even the killing of a man, if it were done through ignorance; *but the soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people.* Numb. xv. 30. It is then murder, when knowingly and designedly, against law, we take away the life of a man; it is theft, when we design the depriving another of what is his own, and illegally execute our designs; and so of other sins. Facts therefore done through mere involuntary error and unaffected ignorance, being always looked upon as free from crime, and such as are done with design being looked upon as criminal, it is evident that conscience is to be followed, and he is always guilty of the least crimes, who recedes the least from that.

Will an erroneous conscience therefore excuse all faults? Or will he that follows that be free from the imputation of sin? Will error, like charity, *cover the multitude of sins*? Or in what consists the crime of erroneous persons?

The crime consists in what I have more than once observed, in the negligence of such as are betrayed into error; which negligence is more or less punishable, as the will of God has been plainer or more discoverable by men. Punishable, I say, but not by man, unless the errors betray them into such acts as are inconsistent with the civil interests of mankind. For since the fault lies only in negligence, what man alive can tell what industry, pains or labour has been used to attain the truth? God, the searcher of hearts, can easily discover this; and therefore we are assured, Rom. i. 20. that the Gentiles are without excuse, for their follies and sins in idolatry, *because that which may be known of God is manifest in, or to, them; for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*

But then if the fault of negligence be removed, if diligence and industry be applied, and yet the error be insurmountable, it is plain the error is involuntary; it is necessary, because out of our power to remove it; and therefore the persons, under such mistake, are as free from crime, or the imputation of it, and as

innocent, as any orthodox persons are ; and I see not how God could either be good or just, if he laid it to their charge. Wherever there is crime there must be concurrence of will. He that follows an erroneous conscience, may be guilty of sin, if his error be voluntary ; but if he can be charged with neither negligence nor affected ignorance, nor any wilfulness, he cannot have any crime.

It is time now to look back, and to view the ground we have gone over. It is evident, I believe, *first*, that no involuntary errors are punishable. Therefore, *secondly*, that those persons whose errors are involuntary in purely speculative matters are not punishable. Nor, *thirdly*, such, whose involuntary errors have only accidental connexions with practice. Nor, *fourthly*, such, whose involuntary errors have a necessary connexion, so long as the connexion is not seen by them. The only punishable errors are such as are voluntary, and proceed from negligence ; and in this case too, to speak properly, it is the negligence, and not the error which is punishable. *Lastly*, it has been proved, that an erroneous conscience obliges us to follow its dictates, and that it is no crime to break the laws of God through unaffected ignorance, and always one to act against one's conscience.

Let me now a little touch those theological scarecrows, as they are commonly used, and as Mr Hales, in his tract of Schism, calls them, *Heresy* and *Schism*. From what has been said, it follows, that that heresy

cannot be damnable, which consists in the belief of any false notion embraced after search and careful inquiry, be it what it will ; whether it be in a speculative matter, or in such points as have either accidental or necessary connexion with practice ; and the reason is in all these cases, error is involuntary, and therefore is not punishable. It cannot be criminal, unless it proceed from wilful negligence in searching after the will of God, and inquiring into his laws. For if a great deal of pains and care has been used to know the mind of God, and yet we cannot attain it, it is not our fault, and consequently we cannot be chargeable. “For if God,” says Mr Chillingworth, “would have had his meaning in these places certainly known, how could it stand with his wisdom to be so wanting to his own will and end as to speak obscurely ? Or, how can it consist with his justice, to require of men to know certainly the meaning of those words, which he himself hath not revealed ? Suppose there were an absolute monarch, that in his own absence from one of his kingdoms, had written laws for the government of it, some very plainly, and some very ambiguously and obscurely, and his subjects should keep those that were plainly written with all exactness ; and for those that were obscure, use their best diligence to find his meaning in them, and obey them according to the sense of them which they conceive ; should this king either with justice or wisdom be offended with these subjects, if by reason of

the obscurity of them, they mistook the sense of them, and fail of performance, by reason of their error?

To make therefore heresy punishable, it must first be proved criminal; and to do that, it must be proved voluntary or to proceed from negligence. And then the definition of it must be, not, as it is usually put, for an error in fundamentals, but something else. However, when once men are agreed upon what are fundamentals, and lay aside human deductions, as certainly nonfundamentals; sure it is, that a great many notions, to serve a party, frequently called heresies, will be blotted out of the catalogue. A heretic that is punishable, is one that maintains doctrines contrary to the doctrines of Christ, through pride, or vain glory, or any sinister end; so that the fault of a heretic lies in the irregularity of his will, not in his understanding. God may punish such, consistent with goodness, justice, and mercy; and in such cases every man should follow the Apostle's rule concerning heretics, Tit. iii. 10, 11. *A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* For surely such a heretic, as is before mentioned, who will presume to teach doctrines from such carnal ends, has all the characters which the Apostle gives; he is subverted, he sins, he is selfcondemned; but as for that which generally bears the name of heresy, viz. an error in some speculations about the Trinity, or other myste-

ries of Christianity, a man who has carefully studied, and is only mistaken in these matters, will hardly be found to have above one of the three characters the Apostle gives of a heretic. If he be subverted, yet it will be hard to prove sin, or selfcondemnation, upon him.

In short, heresy is not an error of the understanding, but of the will. If errors of the understanding are criminal, let all be so, and punish philosophical ones as well as theological, and take into the account all others too, and *let him that is without sin amongst you cast the first stone*. If this seem shocking, give but a good reason why theological errors of the understanding must be sinful and liable to punishments, and I will venture to promise to prove others to be under the same predicament. If you allow me, that heresy be an error of the will, then tell me why the man that impartially studies the Scriptures, and differs in his notions from the received hypotheses, in some mysterious speculative matters, is branded with the ignominious character of heretic? It is surprising, therefore, that a professed opinion, accompanied with charity and good nature, should become more criminal in some men's minds, than even a wicked life. If it were in my choice to appear before the great Searcher of hearts, in what manner I would, I would rather appear with a thousand errors, and what some call heresies, about me, if they were such as proceeded from real judgment, after all my industry to search

out truth, and to know the will of God, than to appear as one who has been ever drunk, or unjust, or profane, without one speculative error in his head.

And yet how lightly are these passed over, and how terribly is an erroneous person, or perhaps one no more than suspected of error, hampered, persecuted, and worried? "Anciently," says Mr Hales, in his sermon upon Rom. xiv. 1. "heretical and orthodox Christians, many times, even in public holy exercise, conversed together without offence. It is noted in the ecclesiastical stories, that the Arians and right believers so communicated together in holy prayers, that you could not distinguish them till they came to the *Δοξολογία*, the *Gloria Patri*, which the Arians used with some difference from other Christians. But those were times, *quorum lectionem habemus, virtutem non habemus; we read of them in our books, but we have lost the practice of their patience.*" And presently afterwards, "SEVERITY against, and SEPARATION from heretical companies, took its beginning from the heretics themselves." This latter is plainly a mistake in this great man. For severity on religious accounts plainly took its beginning from the *orthodox*. But if you will say, what I will not at present examine or refute, that the fact was otherwise, I shall ask, whence then is it that orthodox persons are so ready to follow the evil example of heretics, and what is more, the very worst part of their example? Whence is it, that they so readily embrace the means

which were invented by erroneous persons to carry on a wrong cause? Do but consult experience and that will tell you, that since the time when force and temporal punishments were first used to propagate notions, it has been ten times, I might say ten thousand times, used to propagate errors, instead of once to propagate truth.

As to *Schism*, I shall only add, that from what has been said, nothing can be inferred that will encourage that; and I cannot but refer you to Mr Hale's tract upon that subject, which you cannot read without both pleasure and advantage.

If, Sir, you should think fit to make a public reply to what is here offered, I know you are too much a gentleman to catch at words, and let go my meaning. I persuade myself that you will believe me, when I assure you, that I love truth for its own sake, and am overjoyed when I find it, though it makes against me. I only allot to truth the first place in my heart; next to that, you have the preeminence in,

SIR,

Your most obedient Servant.

SELECTION
FROM THE WRITINGS
OF
DR BENSON.

GEORGE BENSON.

THE character of a very learned theologian, and of a most zealous and persevering inquirer after truth, justly belongs to Dr Benson. Few men have exhibited a fairer mind, or laboured with more intenseness of purpose to discover the exact meaning of the sacred Scriptures ; and few have done more by their writings to throw light on some of the dark points of theology, or by the example of a good life to adorn the profession and faith of a Christian.

He was born at Great Salkeld in Cumberland, on the first of September, 1699. His parents, who were distinguished for their piety and devotedness to religion, early destined him for the christian ministry. After a due course of preparation he entered the University of Glasgow, where he continued till 1721. Near the close of this year he went to London, and having been examined and approved by a body of Presbyterian clergymen, he soon began to preach under their auspices. He was particularly fortunate in the friendship of the learned Dr Calamy, in whose family he resided for some time, and by whose recommendation and influence he was unanimously chosen

pastor of a dissenting congregation at Abington, Berkshire. In this place he remained seven years, sedulously devoted to his studies and the duties of his profession. While at Abington he published three discourses, chiefly designed for young persons. These discourses, although they were received with approbation, he afterwards refused to have reprinted, alleging as a reason, that his inquiries had led him to distrust the accuracy of the doctrines inculcated in them, and that he could not conscientiously suffer anything under his control to go out to the public, of the truth of which he had not an unwavering conviction. In short, he had been educated a Calvinist, but as he studied the Scriptures more profoundly he could not find the doctrines of Calvinism there, and he was obliged to dismiss them from his creed, or sacrifice his integrity to the blind reverence of a system, for which he could discover no foundation either in reason or the word of God. Benson was not a man to hesitate for a moment in deciding on the course, which he ought to pursue ; he was equally constant in searching for the truth, and fearless in avowing and defending it.*

* The independence of his spirit, and his mode of thinking in regard to human forms of faith and worship, are strikingly illustrated in the following letter to Mr Towgood, written by Dr Benson about four years before his death.

“DEAR SIR,

“I herewith send you a copy of a letter concerning nonconformity. I was desirous you should see it, because I hope you are pro-

While at Abington he also published a treatise entitled a *Defence of the Reasonableness of Prayer*. This was accompanied by a translation of the short work of Maximus Tyrius, in which are contained several objections to the propriety and purpose of prayer. Benson answered these objections. It was in connexion with this performance, that he published the tract on *Predestination*, containing an intelligible and practical view of a subject, which has so long contributed food to the insatiable, bewildering metaphysics of speculative divines, confounding the counsels of

ceeding in your answer to Powel's Sermon concerning subscription to the Thirty Nine Articles in any sense, in every sense, and in no sense at all; as articles of truth, which are not true; as articles of peace, which create endless contentions; as articles of the church of England, which the divines of that church commonly refute; as articles made to prevent diversity of opinions, and which greatly increase diversity of opinions; as articles made in the days of bigotry by men, who had no critical skill in the Scriptures, to fetter the ages of learning and free inquiry. And for five hundred pounds per annum, or less money there are men who will subscribe, who will contend for subscribing to these same articles, whether ministers believe them or not. *Pudet haec opprobria.*

"I am pleased that I have had the happiness to see you once. I shall never see you more in this world. I am delighted with the prospect of meeting you in a better state, where there are no subscriptions to articles required, no bigotry, nor anything to offend any more.

"With great esteem for you,

"I am yours sincerely,

"GEORGE BENSON."

The above letter was first published in the *Monthly Repository*, Volume VIII, for 1813, and was communicated to that work by Mr Manning of Exeter, who had received the original from the daughter of Mr Towgood.

truth and reason, and driving plain common sense to despair and distraction. The author was induced to examine, with great caution, an article of faith, which he had received as a leading tenet of the christian system, but which his conscience and maturer judgment, strengthened by the light of Scripture, told him was only a shadow, having nothing to do with the realities constituting the religion of Jesus. The fruit of his inquiry, and the sources of his conviction, are presented in this tract.

A society of dissenters in Southwark invited the author to become their pastor in the year 1729. He accepted the invitation, and discharged the duties of a clergyman in that place eleven years. In 1740 he was settled at Crouched Friars as a colleague with Dr Lardner. To the pastoral charge of this society Dr Benson was devoted till, near the close of his life, his growing infirmities compelled him to resign. He lived in great harmony with Dr Lardner, and although in several particulars their opinions were not the same, yet they often discussed these topics in a friendly manner, and with an attachment increased in proportion as they were convinced, by their constant intercourse, of each other's sincerity and singleness of character. They were associated eleven years, and when Dr Lardner resigned his place in 1751, Dr Benson wrote to him as follows. "I was so much affected on Monday evening upon reading your letter, that I had very little sleep that night; and my mind still remains greatly

affected with the thoughts of parting with you ; for though I cannot but own I feel the weight of your reasons, yet I must frankly tell you, that I do not expect ever to have an assistant, in whom I can place so thorough a confidence, and for whom I can entertain so warm an affection, and so high an esteem. I thank you heartily for all your friendly, kind, and obliging treatment of me, especially since I came to Crouched Friars, and I earnestly desire that our friendship may never be interrupted.”* Dr Lardner was now seventy five years old, and was obliged to desist from preaching by reason of his deafness, and the effects of advancing age.

Dr Benson applied himself with particular earnestness to a critical study of the Scriptures. He was captivated with Locke’s mode of interpreting and illustrating the Epistles of Paul, and formed a design of completing the work so successfully begun by this great writer. In the prosecution of this plan he published, in the year 1731, a *Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistle to Philemon*. This specimen met with signal favour from the public, and he was encouraged to proceed in the same manner through the other Epistles. They were all finished, and published at different times. They are now usually found together in two quarto volumes. His paraphrase is exactly on the plan of Locke’s, but the notes are more elaborate,

* Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the late Rev. Nathaniel Lardner, D. D. London. 1769. p. 107.

and comprise a much greater mass of critical learning. Several *Dissertations* are interspersed here and there on some of the more difficult passages of Scripture. These are distinguished for the rational views of theology contained in them, and for the profound critical knowledge of the author. The dissertation attached to the Epistle to Philemon attempts to prove, from the spirit and views of the Apostle Paul as displayed in his writings, that he was neither an impostor nor enthusiast, and therefore that what he wrote must be true, and the christian religion a divine revelation. This was the groundwork of the famous argument, which Lord Littleton has since illustrated with so much beauty and force.

In 1735 the author published his *History of the First Planting of the Christian Religion*; a work of much research, containing instruction in regard to the origin of the Epistles, and numerous collateral and corresponding proofs of their authenticity, and the sacred character of their authors.

Benson's Paraphrase and Notes to the Epistle of James was translated into Latin by John David Michaelis in 1746, and to this translation a recommendatory preface was prefixed by the German professor Baumgarten. The author's dissertation on the authenticity of the text of the *three heavenly witnesses* was translated into Latin by Andrew G. Mash, who added copious notes. In these he attempted to support the authenticity of the text against the arguments

of Benson, which circumstance gives additional value to the following commendation. *Auctor ejus dissertationis magnus est ille Anglorum theologus, verbiq̃ue divini apud Londinenses minister, meritissimus Georgius Bensonius.*

Dr Benson published other works in theology, particularly a treatise on the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, and a volume of *Sermons*. He left in manuscript a *Life of Christ*, which was published as a posthumous work by Dr Amory, who prefixed to the volume a short biographical memoir of the author. He enjoyed the friendship of several men of eminence, both among the dissenters and in the established church, with whom he was in the habit of familiar correspondence. His close application to study, and his sedentary mode of life, impaired his health, and he complains in the prefaces to some of his works, that his health and spirits were not adequate to his laborious undertakings. He died on the sixth of April, 1762, in the sixty third year of his age.

AN

ESSAY

ON THE BELIEF OF THINGS

ABOVE REASON.

FROM BENSON'S TRACTS.

THEOPHILUS and Pyrrho, who had spent so much time in conversing about the *Reasonableness of the Christian Religion as delivered in the Scriptures*,* continued the same friendly regards as formerly, and freely imparted their sentiments to each other, upon all subjects that occurred.

One evening they were talking over public affairs; and Theophilus was expatiating upon the insolence and boundless ambition of such tyrannical and aspiring monarchs, who can sacrifice the lives of thousands to their pride and vanity; who care not how many are made widows or orphans; how much trade lan-

* The reference here is to the author's work with this title, parts of which are in the form of a dialogue between two persons distinguished by the above fictitious names. This essay was written chiefly in reply to some popular objections, which had been advanced against that work.—ED.

guishes; how much the course of law is stopped; and how many towns and countries become a heap of desolation and ruin, especially where the seat of war happens to be; or how much all the liberal arts and sciences languish, amidst the sound of arms, and the hoarse voice of war.

Have such ambitious monarchs no bowels, no humanity, none of the tender sentiments, and kind affections? I hope the time approaches, when they shall receive a proper rebuke; and be disabled, at least for one generation, from molesting the surrounding nations, and disturbing the repose and tranquillity of Europe.

But Pyrrho stopped Theophilus, in the midst of his pathetic oration, and gave a turn to the conversation, by saying, he knew that moral and religious subjects were most agreeable to his friend Theophilus, that there was one interesting subject, on which he had touched in his *Reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, and in the *Appendix*; that what he had there said was entirely satisfactory to some, but that others either hesitated, or absolutely denied the truth of what he had asserted.

When Theophilus was going to inquire, what he referred to, Pyrrho said he had lately received a letter from a friend of his, who corresponded with him upon many occasions; that the letter was entirely upon the subject he now referred to; and that therefore he would read it, if Theophilus pleased.

Theophilus gratefully accepted of his offer ; upon which he read, as follows.

“ Dear Sir,

“ When I have no news to impart, I collect what materials I can, of any other kind, to show how desirous I am to keep up a correspondence with you. An ingenious gentleman of my acquaintance, whom I will call *Novatianus*, was in company with the lady *Aspasia*, who was exclaiming bitterly against a certain preacher, whose historical name shall be *Eusebius*. For Eusebius had asserted something, in one of his sermons, which gave the lady great offence. Upon which she condemned him, with a warm zeal, and great fluency of speech ; and declared, *she would never hear him more as long as she lived*. This occasioned the following dialogue between her and my friend.

“ *Novatianus*. What was it, madam, in Eusebius’s sermon, which offended you so much ?

“ *Aspasia*. He asserted that *we are to believe nothing but what we can understand*.

“ *Novatianus*. Was that the thing which gave you so much offence ?

“ *Aspasia*. Yes, Sir, and enough too. I wonder how any body can venture to assert such a thing.

“ So far the dialogue proceeded ; and then they conversed, for an hour or two, about other matters ; by which means this affair was quite forgot. Then Novatianus begged the favour of a pen and ink, and

a small piece of paper; all which a servant readily brought him. Upon the paper he wrote down the following words in Greek, ὁ Θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν· and then very gravely gave them to the lady, and desired her to read them. That revived the dialogue, which proceeded as follows. Aspasia, looking first upon the paper, and then looking earnestly, and with surprise and confusion, in Novatianus's face, said, sir, I cannot read them. What do you mean by this? It is not English, and they are strange letters to me. I cannot imagine what you design, by asking me to read what I know nothing about. Novatianus gravely said, do you believe them, madam?

“How can I, answered Aspasia, with great quickness, unless I understand them?

“Hold, madam, replied Novatianus, you may surely believe things, which you cannot understand.

“*Aspasia.* That is impossible.

“*Novatianus.* Then I find that you are, after all, of Eusebius's opinion, notwithstanding his sermon offended you so much.

“This startled the lady, and caused her to say; *I profess, I believe I am wrong.* The thing never appeared to me in this light before. I really begin to suspect that I was mistaken, and that Eusebius was in the right. I beg his pardon for condemning him before I had duly considered the reasonableness of what he said. But what is the meaning of these words? For I cannot so much as read them.

“Novatianus said, I will assure you, madam, they are the words of holy Scripture ; and that according to the original. They contain a plain truth, and a very great and important truth. I would therefore have you try once more whether you cannot believe them before you understand them. Aspasia was now impatient to have them explained ; and said to Novatianus, teaze me no longer. I freely acknowledge, that I was too rash and inconsiderate ; and I am now fully convinced, that I cannot tell whether I believe what you propose to me, or not, till I understand what is meant thereby. Pray tell me, therefore, what the words signify ; and keep me no longer in suspense. As soon as I understand them, I will then tell you frankly whether I believe them or not.

“Well then, said Novatianus, I will gratify you by telling you that you may find the passage, 1 John iv. 8. and the English of it is, *God is love*.

“That proposition, said Aspasia, I most readily and firmly believe ; but I find that I could not believe it, till I understood it. I heartily beg Eusebius’s pardon, and sincerely condemn my own folly and imprudence, in censuring what I ought to have applauded. I will promise you I will go and hear him again, and shall now have a better opinion of him than ever.

“The next time that Novatianus visited Aspasia, she continued of the same mind, and severely condemned herself, but applauded Eusebius, and thanked Novatianus for taking so kind and ingenious a

method of leading her into right sentiments upon that head ; but was ready to wonder that she had not, before that, seen the matter in the same light, as it appeared so very obvious, now she had attended to it and carefully considered it.

“I know, my friend Pyrrho, that you are a speculative man, and will make reflections on such a story, which would not occur to others. Instead of news therefore or business, I thought it might not be amiss to send you this story. If it can afford you any useful hints, it is at your service. If not, accept it as a testimony of my being ready to oblige you.”

When Pyrrho had read this letter, Theophilus said, that Novatianus had acted like a man of sense ; and that he had clearly shown that *men cannot believe what they do not understand*. How, said Pyrrho, is it possible that Theophilus and I should think so much alike upon such a subject ? Yes, said Theophilus, and I further apprehend that, when the terms are explained, and persons of different sects and parties understand one another upon this head, they are more agreed than is at first imagined. Pyrrho could hardly be persuaded of this, and alleged, that it was the opinion of the *infidels*, that *men must understand before they can believe* ; and he observed, that they commonly charged Christians, and even divines, with being of the contrary opinion. You know very well, Theophilus, that the author of *Christianity not founded on Argument*, has in a sneering manner said,

“Though men cannot be all of one opinion, they may of *one faith* ; which they hold, not in unity of understanding, but, as our Liturgy well expresses it, *in the bond of peace and unity of spirit.*”

And again, “I am fully persuaded, that the judging at all of religious matters is not the proper province of *reason* ; or, indeed, an affair where she has any concern.”

I need not point you out more passages to the same purpose in an author, which you have so much studied.

The author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* [pp. 199, &c. 12mo. ed.] says, “If I do not understand the terms of a proposition ; or if they are inconsistent with one another ; or so uncertain, that I know not what meaning to fix on them ; here is nothing told me, and consequently no room for belief. But, although designing men very well know, that it is impossible to believe, when we know not what it is we are to believe ; or to believe an absurd or contradictory proposition ; yet they, because without examination people may be brought to fancy they believe such things, and it being their interest to confound men’s understandings, and prevent all inquiry, craftily invented the notion of believing things *above reason*. Here the ravings of an enthusiast are on a level with the dictates of infinite wisdom, and nonsense is rendered most sacred ; here a contradiction is of great use to maintain a doctrine, that, when fairly stated, is

not defensible ; because, by talking backward and forward, by using obscure terms, and taking words in different senses, they may easily amuse and puzzle the people.

“ On this foundation, *transubstantiation* is built ; and most of those mysterious propositions, about which, in former days, Christians so frequently murdered each other. But, if the Scripture was designed to be understood, it must be within the reach of human understanding, and consequently it cannot contain propositions, that are either above or below human understanding.”

I need not repeat more of that author's words. What has been mentioned sufficiently points out his meaning.

Theophilus said, that *rational divines* did not appear to him to think differently on that subject ; though it was the mean, unworthy, and ungrateful method of those, who wrote against revelation, frequently to throw out the most severe reflections upon those very persons, from whom they have learned all *the best* principles they have.

How can it be the interest of divines of learning and integrity, to confound men's understandings, and prevent all inquiry ? Or who have done more to promote *freedom of inquiry*, or made a better use of it, than some of the most celebrated divines of our own nation ?

It is allowed, on all hands, that a single idea cannot be the object of assent or dissent. But, when a

proposition is laid before us, and we are required to believe it, it is necessary we should understand the words in which it is expressed or delivered. Your friend Novatianus has clearly shown, that as long as it continues in an unknown language, we can neither believe nor know anything about it.

But suppose we understand the words in which any proposition is expressed, or have in our minds the ideas signified by those words, it does not follow from thence, that we must immediately believe that proposition to be true. No doctrine of *divine revelation* can possibly contradict any principle of reason, or be inconsistent with it. Neither can any two doctrines or propositions in divine revelation be contradictory to, or irreconcilable with, one another. In such cases, the things proposed cannot be any part of *divine revelation*, though some persons may assert them to be so. Or, if the words in which they are expressed be contained in the divine writings, we may depend upon it, we have not yet found out the right meaning of those words.

If a proposition be selfevident, or we perceive the truth of it by *intuition*; or, if it be proved by a train of undoubted propositions, each of them ranged in a proper order, and connected with one another, which is termed *demonstration*; then we do not call that *faith*, but *knowledge*. If there be only probable arguments for the truth of any proposition, we call that *opinion*. If a proposition is supported by credible

testimony, the assent to that is properly called *faith*. If it be the testimony of man, it is *human faith*, if it be the testimony of God, it is *divine faith*.

But, in all these cases, it is impossible to assent to that, of which we have no ideas, for that would be to believe we know not what. And, if we have credible testimony, or some other good arguments, then we have a *reason* for believing; otherwise we believe we know not why. And we ought, in all such cases, to suspend our belief, or withhold our assent.

Pyrrho said, I think I clearly apprehend your meaning, which I would express in my own way, and I desire you would set me right, if, in any particular, I have mistaken you.

There are two parts in every proposition, a *subject* and a *predicate*, which are united in an affirmative, or separated in a negative, proposition. Now we must have the ideas affixed to the words, which express the *subject*, and the *predicate*; or understand the *subject*, and what is affirmed, or denied, concerning that subject. And we must likewise have the testimony of God, or of some credible person, for joining those two ideas together in an affirmative proposition; or separating them in a negative proposition. And without understanding the words, and having that, or some other *reason* for assenting to the proposition, which they express, we can neither understand nor believe anything about them.

Theophilus acknowledged, that Pyrrho had spoken exactly agreeable to his sentiments on this subject.

But Pyrrho was a man given to argue on all sides, in order to have a full view of the subject, or to see what could be alleged for or against any opinion. He therefore told Theophilus, that the matter must not drop thus. For, though they seemed to be agreed, there were several who would not fall in so readily with their conclusion; and therefore he desired they might further debate the matter. Theophilus asked him what he had to say against a thing, which seemed so plain and obvious?

Pyrrho answered, that he had often heard divines say, that in Scripture several doctrines are represented as *mysteries*; and that seemed inconsistent with the notion now advanced, viz. *that we must understand things before we can believe them*.

Theophilus with great coolness said, I acknowledge freely that the New Testament often speaks of *mysteries*; but then that word, in Scripture, never signifies what is incomprehensible or unintelligible.

I have carefully examined the sense of the word *mystery* in all the places where it is used in the New Testament, and I am well satisfied it never signifies *an unintelligible truth*, but a *fact* which was formerly *a secret*, but is now made known. And when made known, it is very plain and easy to be understood. Accordingly, the Apostle speaks of a very plain and intelligible fact, when he declares, “that the Christians, who shall be found alive at Christ’s second coming, shall not die, but be suddenly changed into

immortal, without dying." And, in delivering that truth, he says, *Behold, I show you a mystery.* And, in other places the same Apostle talks of *making known the mystery of the Gospel.* The truth of the case is, the Gospel is not a *hidden* but a *revealed* mystery, made known to the world to enlighten their understandings, to lead them to the practice of universal righteousness, and thereby to their true dignity, perfection, and happiness.

In the next place Pyrrho alleged, that divines had often asserted, "that we may and ought to believe things *above reason*, though not contrary to it."

Theophilus replied, that there were two senses in which this proposition might be interpreted. The one is, that *faith*, or what is revealed as the object of faith, contains some things which *human reason alone, and of itself*, could not have found out; but if known at all must be discovered by *revelation*. For instance, "that men are to be raised from the dead; that Jesus Christ is to judge the world." And in this sense, I suppose, all who acknowledge *divine revelation* are agreed, that some of the objects of *faith* are above *human reason*; or, in other words, that there are some things discovered in the Bible, which could not have been known to men, unless they had been communicated by *divine revelation*.

But there is another sense in which *faith* has by some been affirmed to be *above reason*; viz. that men may, and ought to believe things, which they cannot

understand or comprehend. And in this sense I look upon the assertion to be groundless and false ; and that, in this sense, *faith* can no more be *above reason*, than it can be *contrary to it*.

Pyrrho proceeded in his objections, and said, there are numberless things, which exceed our capacity, or which are unintelligible and incomprehensible to us, at least in the present state ; and yet we firmly believe them, though we do not understand them ; and therefore it is plain we may believe things which we do not understand.

Theophilus desired Pyrrho to name one of those many propositions, which he believed, though he did not understand it.

Pyrrho replied that, as to giving an account of his own faith, he desired to be excused ; and that he was not a divine sufficiently learned and profound readily to mention such a proposition. He intimated further, that he was representing the sentiments of others, and that he had frequently met with this objection.

Theophilus acknowledged that there are many things, which we do not understand. But then, said he, as long as we do not understand them, they are the objects, not of *our faith*, but of *our ignorance*. For, as long as we understand them not, the assenting to them is in effect assenting to nothing ; and that is in reality no assent at all.

Well but, Theophilus, said Pyrrho, will you not allow that there are many things, which we actually and

firmly believe, though we cannot comprehend how they are effected ; or do not understand the mode or manner of their existence, with all their relations, connexions, and circumstances? For instance, we believe that God made the world, though we do not know how he made it. We believe that the soul and body of man are united, and mutually influence one another, though we do not know how they are united, or how body and spirit can have such a mutual influence. We believe that God will raise the dead, but how he will do it, that we understand not, neither can we at present comprehend. And many more like instances might be named.

Theophilus replied, that the same answer might be returned to this objection as to the last, viz. as far as we believe, so far we must have ideas ; and that, where our ideas end, there ends our assent or faith. Unless we understand what is meant by these words, *God created the world*, how could we talk or think about such a thing ? Unless we had the ideas affixed to the words *body* and *spirit*, we could not talk of their union. And, if we have no meaning to such words, then to say *they are united*, would be to talk of the union of nothing with nothing. So likewise we know what is meant by a man's being dead, and raised, or brought to life again ; otherwise we should mean nothing, when we speak of the resurrection from the dead. To believe that God made the world is to believe a thing, that is both comprehensible and highly

reasonable. Who should make the world but God ? Such an extensive and complicated, such a wise and glorious production must needs have been the effect of the most consummate wisdom, goodness, and power, exerted immediately by the first cause and original author of all ; or by some being, that has derived his power from the first cause. From the visible creation, we are naturally led up to the invisible cause and author of all ; and here is nothing incomprehensible in all this. *That God made the world* is one proposition. *How he made it* would be another, and a quite different proposition. The first we believe and understand. The latter we know and understand nothing of. The last, therefore, is not the object of *our knowledge*, or of *our faith*, but of *our ignorance*. *That the soul and body of man are united* is one proposition. *How they are united* would be another, and a quite different proposition. The first we understand and believe. The latter we know nothing of. This last therefore, again, is the object of *our ignorance*, not of *our knowledge* or *faith*. That men are to die, and that Jesus Christ will raise them from the dead, or bring them to life again, are propositions contained in Scripture ; and they are both very plain and intelligible. *How Jesus Christ will raise the dead* is another, and a quite different proposition, which God hath not seen fit to reveal to us. We are not, therefore, required to know or believe anything about it. The fact, in all these cases, is one thing ; the mode or manner is another

and a quite distinct thing. The former we understand and believe. The latter we neither understand nor believe ; for we know nothing at all of it.

Pyrrho said, Theophilus, suppose that God should tell you, *that a thing is so and so* ; will you not believe it, unless he acquaint you with the mode or manner of it ; how it is effected or how it exists ; or how it is reconcileable with all the other truths you are acquainted with ? Theophilus answered, as far as God reveals anything, so far he explains or discovers it. And whatever God says, I am very ready to assent to it, for that very reason, that God hath said it. Because whatever God says must be true. But I must understand what is said, as well as be satisfied that the discovery came from God, before I can believe it *as a divine revelation*. If God reveals anything with its mode and manner, and all its relations and circumstances, then I believe that, with its mode and manner, and all its relations and circumstances. If God reveals part of a thing, as far as God reveals it so far I believe it. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God*. They are his peculiar, and we have nothing to do with them. They cannot, therefore, be the objects of our knowledge or of our faith.

Whatever contradicts a known truth, or is irreconcilable with it, that cannot possibly be part of a *divine revelation*. As long as I think it inconsistent with any known truth, so long I must either reject it, or suppose that I have not yet the true meaning of

the words in which it is delivered. Where our ideas are clear, there our faith may be clear. Where our ideas are confused or obscure, there our faith must necessarily be confused or obscure. Where our ideas are adequate, there our faith may be adequate. Where our ideas are short or partial, there our faith must be partial, or extended only to part of a thing. But where we have no ideas at all, there we can have no faith at all.

Pyrrho smiled and said, surely, Theophilus, you are a strange man ; and I could hardly have believed it of you. What, will no objection stand before you ? Nor anything prove to you, *that men may believe what they cannot understand* ? I have one objection more, which so modest a man, as you are, will scarce know what to say to. And that is, that *fathers* as well as *moderns*, *doctors* and *bishops*, *philosophers* and *divines*, eminently learned, great and good men, have contended for believing things which we do not understand. And surely, such wise and good men could never all be mistaken ; neither can it be supposed that they would have contended for this opinion, unless there had been truth and reason in it.

You yourself have acknowledged that Tertullian said of one article, "I believe it, because it is impossible." And that bishop Beveridge has assigned it as a reason for his believing another article of faith, "That he could not conceive or *understand* it."*

* See the Reasonableness of the Christian Religion, &c. p. 132, &c.

Theophilus observed that, in mentioning such particulars, he had made his remarks upon them ; which plainly showed he greatly disapproved of such obnoxious expressions. But Pyrrho said, that to show that those mentioned were not singular, he could produce other celebrated persons to confirm their opinion.

St Austin often cites what he had read in the LXX, and *vulgar Latin*,—*If you do not believe you shall not understand*,—to infer from it, *that we must believe divine truths, before we understand them*. And the crowd of Popish writers follow him, to authorise a blind and *implicit faith*. Theophilus replied, if St Austin had had an exact translation *of that passage*, he had only read, *unless you believe*, [viz. that the kingdoms of *Assyria* and *Israel* shall shortly be destroyed,] *you shall not be established*.*

Pyrrho owned that those he had already quoted were, indeed, *divines* ; and he observed, that the author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* had insinuated, that “it was their interest to confound men’s understandings, and to prevent all inquiry ; and therefore they have craftily invented the notion of believing things *above reason*.” But there are others who have contended for the same thing.

You have quoted Lord Bacon as saying something very like it.† And there have been others as well as *divines*, persons of excellent judgment, and great

* See an Essay for a new Translation of the Bible, p. 63.

† See The Reasonableness of the Christian Religion, &c. p. 132.

friends to free inquiry, and who were never suspected of a design to impose upon and confound men's understandings, that yet have thought it just to admit the notion of *things above reason*. I shall mention only two more, both of them *laymen* of eminent note for their attempts to inform and improve men's understandings, and promote useful knowledge, Mr Boyle and Mr Locke.

That excellent philosopher, the great and good Mr Boyle, has written a treatise, which he calls *a Discourse of Things above Reason ; inquiring whether a philosopher should admit there are any such. To which are annexed some advices about judging of things said to transcend reason*.

In that discourse, he ranks *things above reason*, under three heads. The first is, of things whose nature is such, that we are not able distinctly and adequately to comprehend it. Such is the Almighty God, whose perfections are so boundless, and his nature so singular, that it is presumption to imagine, that such finite beings, as our souls, can frame full and adequate ideas of them. The second sort consists of things, which have properties and ways of operation, which we cannot intelligibly account for or explain by anything we already know. The third sort is, of such things that involve some notion or proposition, that we see not how to reconcile with some other thing, that we are persuaded to be truth ; and which are incumbered with difficulties and objections, that cannot directly and satisfactorily be resolved. All these he

calls *privileged things* ; because they surpass *our reason* ; at least so far that they are not to be judged of, by the same measures and rules, by which men are wont to judge of ordinary things. Accordingly, he puts it among the advices he gives in judging of things that transcend our reason, that a matter of fact or other truth, about *privileged things*, being proved by arguments competent in their kind, we ought not to deny it, merely because we cannot explain, or perhaps so much as conceive the *modus* of it ; or because we know not how to reconcile it to something that is true ; or because it is liable to ill consequences, and is incumbered with great inconveniences. All these things he admirably illustrates and supports by a variety of instances well urged from *Philosophy* and *Natural Theology* ; and concludes, with observing, that we must not expect as to *privileged things*, and the propositions that may be formed about them, to resolve all difficulties and answer all objections ; since we can never directly answer those, which require for their solution a perfect comprehension of what is infinite.

Here Pyrrho made a pause ; but Theophilus desired him to proceed with what he had to allege from Mr Locke ; and then he would make remarks upon all his examples at once.

Well then, said Pyrrho, the other person I refer to is the acute and sagacious Mr Locke, whom I suppose the author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* would not reckon among *those designing men, whose interest it is to confound men's understandings*. He

divides things into those which are *according to reason* ; those things, which are *contrary to reason* ; and those things, which are *above reason*. And these things, when revealed, he makes to be the proper matter of *faith*. [See *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book IV. Chap. xvii. s. 23, and Chap. xviii. s. 7. 9.] He frequently sets himself to point out the shortness of human understanding, and how unable we are to comprehend or explain things, of which yet we have an undoubted certainty. Of these he gives various instances. Among other things he instances in the very notion of *body* ; which is incumbered with some difficulties very hard, and perhaps impossible to be explained or understood by us. The divisibility *in infinitum* of any finite extension, involving us, whether we grant or deny it, in consequences impossible to be explicated, or made in our apprehension consistent. And he would fain know what substance exists, that has not something, which manifestly baffles our understandings. [See *Essay on Human Understanding*, Book II. Chap. xxiii. and Book IV. Chap. iii. See also his works, Vol. I. Page 557. 559, 560, 561. 572.] He allows, therefore, that it cannot be a reasonable foundation for rejecting a doctrine proposed to us, as of divine revelation, that we cannot comprehend the manner of it ; especially, when it relates to the divine essence ; and declares, concerning himself, “ I gratefully receive and rejoice in the light of *divine revelation*, which sets me at rest in many things, the

manner of which my poor reason can by no means make out to me. I readily believe whatever God has declared, though my reason find difficulties in it, which it cannot master." [Ibid. p. 361. 573.]

Pyrrho said he had now done, and declared that he would not have dwelt so much upon the sentiments of such great men, if some learned and ingenious persons had not laid so much stress upon them.

Theophilus answered, when an argument is brought from the sentiments of some wise, great, and good man, whose authority we reverence and hardly dare oppose, the logicians call it *Argumentum ad veracundiam*, an address to our modesty. And one would not be very forward in directly contradicting or opposing men eminent for wisdom and piety. But yet this argument may be carried too far, and prevent all farther inquiries and improvements whatever. We justly reverence the names of men of piety and learning in former ages. But, you know, I have already declared that "their notions are nothing to us, any further than they are supported by *reason* and *Scripture*. We call no man master upon earth. We allow no man to *have dominion over our faith*. Churches and councils, fathers and moderns, learned men and celebrated divines have erred, and their determinations are not to be implicitly received."

The church of Rome says, "what, are you wiser than your fathers?" And they quote great names and many authorities. But Protestants do not much re-

gard such arguments against *Scripture* and *common sense*. And even Papists themselves are not much moved by such *fathers*, or authorities, as contradict their sentiments. Mr Boyle and Mr Locke were truly great and good men. But they were not infallible. I suppose, in some particulars, they were both mistaken. And persons, who in this point shelter themselves under their authority, would not in all points be determined by their opinions; or declare that they believe, in every particular, as those great men believed. And, if they had in this point been mistaken, or talked confusedly, it would not therefore be true, or more clear and evident, *that we can believe what we cannot understand*. I would, indeed, as soon be determined by their authority, as that of most men that can be named. But *Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis amica est veritas*.

All this I have said upon the supposition, that Mr Boyle or Mr Locke had differed from me, and said, *that we must believe things which we cannot understand*.

Whereas I do not apprehend, that they have said any such thing, or differ from me upon this head. They have neither of them said more than this, viz. that we must believe some things, which we cannot adequately comprehend, or that have properties and ways of operation, for which we cannot intelligibly account, or that there are some difficulties relating to them, which we cannot solve. Now, wherein does

this differ from what I have already said, unless in the manner of expression? Have I not said, that, "Where our ideas are clear, there our faith may be clear. Where our ideas are obscure or confused, there our faith must necessarily be obscure or confused. Where our ideas are adequate, there our faith may be adequate. Where our ideas are short, or partial, there our faith must be partial, or extend only to part of a thing. But where we have no ideas at all, there we can have no faith at all?"

I have likewise freely allowed, that we may understand or believe a thing, without understanding the mode or manner, relations and circumstances of it. But, where our ideas end, there our faith must end. And can you allege anything from Mr Boyle, or Mr Locke, that contradicts this? How often has Mr Locke, in particular, intimated that it is impossible to judge of, or assent to, anything without having some idea of it? And he concludes his *Chapter of Faith and Reason* thus; "To this crying up of *faith*, in opposition to *reason*, we may I think in a good measure ascribe those absurdities that fill almost all the religions, which possess and divide mankind. For men, having been principled with an opinion, that they must not consult *reason* in the things of *religion*, however apparently contradictory to common sense, and the very principles of all their knowledge, have let loose their fancies and natural superstition, and have been by them led in so strange opinions, and

extravagant practices in religion, that a considerate man cannot but stand amazed at their follies, and judge them so far from being acceptable to the great and wise God, that he cannot avoid thinking them ridiculous and offensive to a sober, good *man*. So that in effect *religion*, which should most distinguish us from beasts, and ought most peculiarly to elevate us, as rational creatures, above brutes, is that wherein men often appear most irrational, and more senseless than beasts themselves. *Credo, quia impossibile est, I believe, because it is impossible*, might in a good man pass for a sally of zeal, but would prove a very ill rule for men to choose their opinions or religion by."

From hence you plainly see, that this great and good man is on my side of the question, and has, in other words, asserted and defended what I am now contending for.

Pyrrho, with a smile, said, you will have things your own way. But let us not conclude the conversation upon this subject, till we have considered of what advantage it may be to mankind, to have this matter set in a clear light.

Theophilus was well pleased with that proposal. For he had a very great aversion to all dry and barren speculations, which may serve to amuse men, but cannot profit them.

I know, says he, some will look upon this as a dry and useless subject; but, to more judicious and considerate persons, it will appear to be a subject of vast extent and great usefulness.

Pyrrho asked, how that could be made to appear?

Theophilus answered, that requiring men, upon pain of damnation, to believe some things, which they cannot understand, was the ready way to unhinge, disturb, and perplex the minds of many weak, but honest and wellmeaning persons. God himself is no hard master. He never requires impossibilities, as the terms of salvation. Why then should men require such things, or represent God as requiring them? Why should they confound the understandings of the weak, who are easily imposed upon and led astray? All that God requires is, that men should assent according to evidence; make their faith a *reasonable service*; and be influenced by it to holiness of temper and life. The terms of acceptance are plain and easy, and the minds of good men ought not to be puzzled and confounded with dark, unintelligible, and incomprehensible speculations.

That indeed, said Pyrrho, seems to be a matter of some consequence. But what have you further to allege?

Theophilus replied, that the making men fancy they can believe what they cannot understand must be of bad consequence, as it leads them to enthusiasm, which is a most dangerous thing in religion. I own that "here the ravings of an enthusiast are on a level with the dictates of infinite wisdom, and nonsense is rendered most sacred; that here a contradiction is of great use to maintain a doctrine, which, when fairly

stated, is not defensible ; because, by talking backward and forward, by using obscure terms, and taking words in different senses, they may easily amuse and puzzle the people. On this foundation, *transubstantiation* is built, and most of those mysterious propositions, about which in former days men so frequently murdered each other."

The *rational Christian* first understands, then considers the evidence, and then believes. The *enthusiast* has a much quicker way, as he fancies, to come at *his faith*. He has inward feelings and divine impulses. He has knowledge and conviction darted into his mind all at once ; such clear knowledge, and strong, irresistible evidence, as satisfies himself ; but is insufficient to satisfy any other person, because it is incommunicable, and he cannot explain to another the nature and evidence of his faith ; what it is he believes, or why he assents to it. He has a strong persuasion, grounded upon the conceit of *inspiration*, without clearly understanding what he believes, or professes ; and without any rational or sufficient evidence on which to ground his assent. To what absurdities must such a person stand exposed ? He may believe *transubstantiation*, or anything else. For, as in the dark all colours are alike, so in his dark mind all the most wild and fanciful conceits, that can be named, may be entertained and zealously contended for, as the great and deep things of God, and the fundamental doctrines of religion. One absurdity,

firmly and tenaciously adhered to, makes way for a thousand. For, if you will be so obsequious as to profess your belief of one thing, which you do not understand, and for which you have no evidence, why not a second, and a third, and so on? When a man is got out of the reach of his own understanding, and into the dark labyrinths of error and enthusiasm; when he renounces his *reason* to follow *fancy*, appetite, or inclination, inward feelings, or imaginary impulses, he can have no ground for the soles of his feet to stand upon, but seems to be bewildered and gone beyond recovery.

Pyrrho observed that the man was in a bad way, who had gone that length, and that he heartily pitied him.

Ay, says Theophilus, he is to be pitied; and so are all they who live around him. For, when a man fancies that he can believe what he cannot understand, it leads him from enthusiasm into *bigotry* and *uncharitableness*. He is not to be argued with, and treated like a rational creature. Nor is he satisfied, that he may enjoy his own unreasonable, blind, and implicit faith; but his zeal hurries him on to make converts, and to persuade others to believe, or at least to talk, as he does; that is, without evidence, and without understanding. And, generally speaking, the more dark and unintelligible any points are, the more warmly and fiercely he contends for them. *Where the iron is blunt he puts to more strength* to make it

cut, and wound, and destroy. The senseless and ridiculous doctrine of *transubstantiation* has occasioned the shedding the blood of more Protestants, than all the great and weighty matters of *the law* and of *the Gospel*.

When a man has reason and evidence for what he says, he is ready to propose them; and that is the best way to make converts among the sober and thinking part of mankind. For when you have convinced an honest man's understanding, you may be sure of him. But when a man holds ridiculous opinions, and makes them fundamental articles of faith; if you deny them, or even doubt, you are reprobate, or in a dangerous state, and must be consigned over to everlasting damnation; as if these zealous defenders of the faith had got the keys of the bottomless pit hanging to their girdles, and could open or shut the gates of the dark, infernal prison, at their pleasure. But, blessed be God, pronounce it who will, *the curse causeless shall not come*. Those who love God, and understand and believe as well as they can, shall none of them be rejected by the righteous and equitable judge of the universe, though they may have been mistaken in some points of opinion, and though their over zealous neighbours should bestow their uncharitable censures upon them, load them with hard names, and use them unkindly here, or consign them over to the misery of the world to come.

Pyrrho observed that Theophilus painted strongly, and spoke with a becoming pathos, but hoped that he could not charge the contrary doctrine with many more bad consequences.

Yes, said Theophilus, I have two more, which I propose to mention, and then I will detain you no longer. The first is, that to contend for believing what we cannot understand is neither more nor less than contending for implicit faith, and greatly favors the church of Rome, that has frequently and in many places prohibited the free use of the Scriptures, taken away that key of knowledge, and neither entered into the true design and interpretation of those sacred writings herself, nor suffered those who were willing to enter in. She has styled ignorance *the mother of devotion*. Methinks I should be sorry to see any Protestants so far doing the work of Papists, as to take men off from a diligent and impartial inquiry into the grounds and reasons of their faith; or in the least to discourage the close and critical examination of the sacred writings; or the free, honest, and open profession of a man's sentiments after he has inquired. You know, Pyrrho, how warm and animated my zeal against Popery has always been, because I have ever looked upon it, not only as the greatest corruption of Christianity, but even a combination against reason and common sense, as well as against the rights and liberties of mankind. And, in proportion, I dislike all tendencies thereto.

Pyrrho could not imagine what the other bad consequence of implicit faith could be ; for Theophilus had already named more than had occurred to him, before the mention of them. But Theophilus put him out of his pain, and said that he had a tender concern for the wellmeaning part of Pyrrho's old friends, though he abhorred their principles.

What friends of mine do you mean, said Pyrrho, with some eagerness, for I do not yet understand you ? Theophilus let him know, that he designed those gentlemen, who are inclined to *infidelity* ; and that, as to all those who are men of integrity and good morals, he should be sorry to do anything to lead them to infidelity, or to establish them therein ; and that he could not but think, that to contend for believing what we cannot understand, was the way to tempt thinking men to infidelity. Not that the Bible itself pleads for such a faith, but the ridiculous notions, and groundless opinions and arguments of some Jews and Christians have furnished those, who have wrote against revelation, with their most formidable objections.

It is a pity, indeed, that such persons have not looked further, and examined the Scriptures themselves. But, on the other hand, the friends of revelation should be very careful not to lay stumbling blocks in the way of those, who are perhaps but too ready to be pleased, when they can find any advantage against their adversaries. However, if all the friends of revelation

had been of my sentiments, and as frankly declared their minds, neither Dr Tyndal, nor any of his brethren, could have flourished and triumphed on this head, as they have done.

Pyrrho thanked his friend for the pains he had taken in his behalf, and said, that by parting with what cannot be defended, and separating the chaff from the pure wheat, the friends of truth would be best able to satisfy their own minds, and to give the most thorough and lasting satisfaction unto all other attentive and well minded persons.





Notice.

THE present Number of the Theological Collection begins the fourth volume, and with the next number the series will terminate. The Editor has accomplished only in part his original design ; but his occupations are now of such a nature as to prevent his pursuing it further. Meantime he would express his acknowledgments for the encouragement he has received from subscribers, and a hope that his efforts may not have been without profit to them. The next Number will contain a copious index to the four volumes.